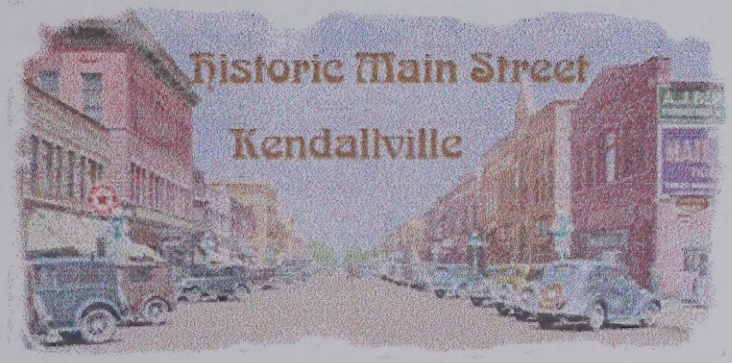
- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register



- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Clocks, watches keep ticking, but time stands still at Christianson's

- Christianson's
- Kimberly's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berthalier
- Disasters
- Historic Register
- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Maps
- Nighthollund
- Photo Gallery
- Water
- Early Beginnings
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Clocks, watches keep ticking, but time stands still at Christianson's

By CHAD SIEVERS

KENDALLVILLE — As the clocks on the walls of Christianson Jewelry, 125 S. Main St., tick and tock, time slowly moves on. Although time has passed, it has not changed the inside of the building much, as a jewelry store has been in the building since it was built in 1874. When a person walks into the north storefront (Christianson owns two storefronts), it is like stepping back in time — to a vintage, quaint jewelry store. Visitors will see the antique mahogany display cases and cabinets filled with necklaces, rings, bracelets, watches and more.

In fact, on the north wall, the designs for the mahogany cabinets and display cases that are still in the store hang on the wall. Louis Beckman, the original owner of the building and co-owner of Gotsch & Beckman Jewelers, installed the cases in 1915, store owner David Christianson said. (Before 1875, the store was at 201 S. Main St. where Klinkenberg's is now.)

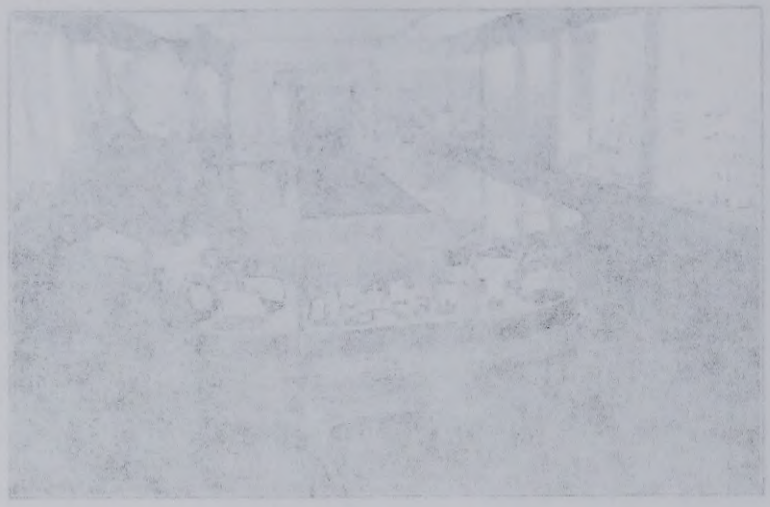
The name was later changed to L. Beckman & Sons after Julius Gotsch, one of the co-owners, left the business to Beckman. Beckman's son, Charles Beckman, joined the business soon thereafter, Christianson said.

In 1916, the older Beckman died unexpectedly and Charles Beckman ran the store alone until Reuben W. Christianson joined him in 1951, forming Beckman & Christianson. In 1955, Christianson became the sole owner and formed Christianson's Jewelry, Inc.

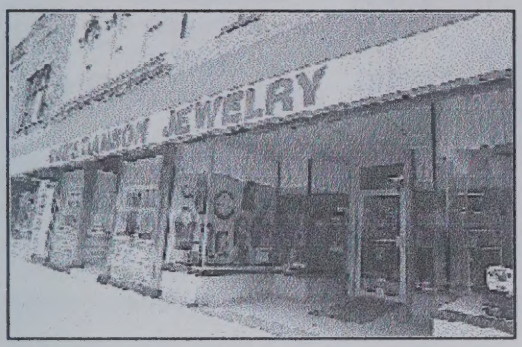
David Christianson joined his father in business in 1975. Reuben Christianson retired in 1984 and died in 1988 at the age of 68.

Throughout all of these changes, the antique display cases and small-town jewelry store remains, for the most part, the same.

LONG HISTORY — Dave Christianson, owner of Christianson Jewelry Inc., stands beside the antique cases that were built by Louis Beckman, an original jeweler in the store. The cases hold watches, rings, necklaces and other jewelry items in the store. (News-Sun photo by Dean Orewiler)



LONG HISTORY — Dave Christianson, owner of Christianson Jewelry Inc., stands beside the antique cases that were built by Louis Beckman, an original jeweler in the store. The cases hold watches, rings, necklaces and other jewelry items in the store. (News-Sun photo by Dean Drewiler)



Christianson Jewelry, 125 S. Main St., a jewelry business since 1875.

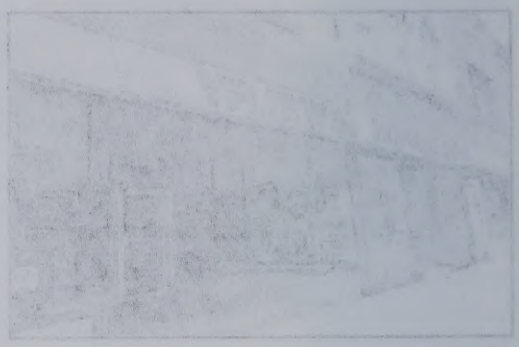
Christianson said until the 1920s a doctor's office occupied the second story of the north storefront. It now is an apartment.

It was in 1991 that Christianson expanded, acquiring the storefront to the south of the store. This building, which at one time had been a wholesale grocery store, allowed more room for Christianson Jewelry's speciality — rebuilding and preserving antique clocks and watches. This building also was built by Louis Beckman in 1875.

Christianson said the store has two clockmakers and one watchmaker that rebuild antique parts of old clocks and watches to get them ticking again. He said the store is known throughout the country for this craft.

A graduate of the Kansas City School of Watchmaking, Christianson said the store does all the work in-house in its repair shop. He said there has never been an antique clock or watch that the craftsmen haven't been able to restore. In addition to this part of the business, Christianson said the store has two bench jewelers that repair, appraise, restore and work with all types of jewelry. Moreover, this repair shop has become one of the largest in the area. People from a four-state area have been referred to the store.

A few areas of the building have been remodeled and updated, Christianson said, but it still has a unique atmosphere not seen much these days.



Christianson Jewelry, 125 S. Main St., a jewelry business since 1875.

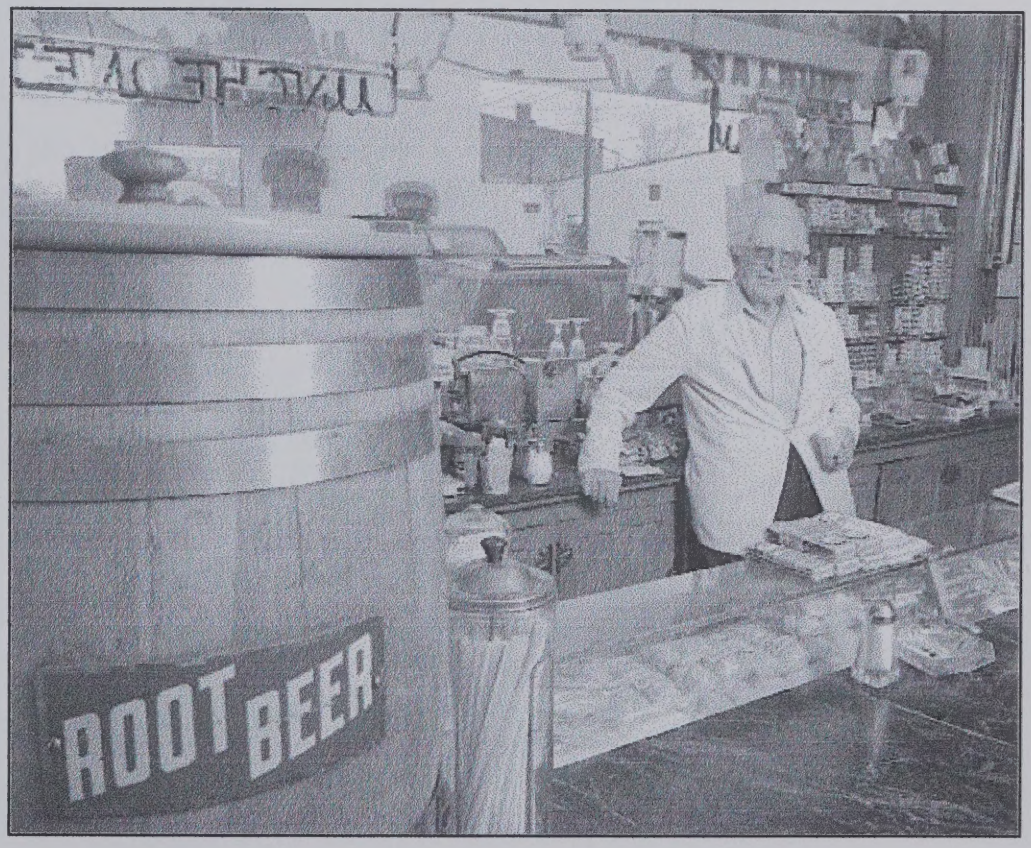
- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Days gone by come alive at Klinkenberg's soda fountain

By CHAD SIEVERS

KENDALLVILLE — On July 2, 1889, Klinkenberg Drug Store opened at 201 S. Main St., and almost 108 years later it stands as the oldest family-owned and operated business in downtown Kendallville.
Owner Bob Klinkenberg, 85, who worked in the store as a child, said his father started the business. Back then the store had a different look as it was lit by kerosene lamps and not by electric lights, he said.
As a young boy and man, Klinkenberg stocked the shelves and assisted customers with their purchases, he said.
Even today, walking into Klinkenberg's is like walking back to the time



A BARREL OF STORIES TO TELL — Bob Klinkenberg, 85, still operates the family-owned Klinkenberg's store at 201 S. Main St. Klinkenberg still holds court around his soda fountain six days a week where patrons share stories of past and present. (News-Sun photo by Dean A. Orewiler)

When neighborhood kids would run to a soda fountain after school for a cherry Coke or ice cream sundae.

In fact, Vicky Linthicum, a Kendallville resident, sitting at the counter with her brother, Robert Taylor, drinking cherry Cokes recently, said, "The place hasn't changed much, neither has Bob."

Customers can sit at the round stools lined up along the smooth black marble countertop and order a chocolate Coke, Klinkenberg's specialty. An old 1-cent gumball machine and a vintage straw container both sit on the counter.

In other parts of the store, dusty display cases exhibit items for sale such as perfume and picture albums. Tall wooden ladders hang from rails along the sides of the store to climb up and reach items on the high shelves.

Behind the soda fountain, an antique wooden cash register with round buttons rings loudly as Klinkenberg deposits money into the drawer after someone makes a purchase. Other vintage items, like a 1-cent match container and a Bromo-Seltzer item advertising "For fast headache relief" sit around the counter.

Klinkenberg sells ice cream and soda items from his fountain. He also sells sandwiches.
Klinkenberg, who was a partner with his father and then took over control of the store in 1942 after his father died, has remodeled it several times since then, he said. He added the soda fountain to the store, but can't remember exactly when he did it. The fountain equipment currently in the store was added about 15 years ago, he said.
A part of the fountain he is proud of is his operational wooden root beer barrel. It sits at the end of the counter, and he turns the spout for the root beer to pour out.
"Nobody else has got one," he said. "You'd have to pay a hell of a lot to buy one now."
Besides a chocolate Coke, he also has other flavors like vanilla, cherry, lemon, strawberry and ginger ale.

Klinkenberg's, 201 S. Main St.

Prior to Klinkenberg's, the building held the John Gappinger Harness Shop. From 1863-1872, Julius Gotch and Louis Beckman had their jewelry store at 201 S. Main St.
The upper part of the building has held such businesses as a doctor's office, a beauty shop, Finley Law, John McCreery Employment, the International Molders and Allied Workers 62, the Frank Meyer Studio and the Gappinger residence.
Klinkenberg and his wife, Cora, have been married for more than 60 years, and both live in Kendallville. They have one daughter who lives in Fort Wayne. Their son died a couple of years ago.
A graduate of Kendallville High School, Klinkenberg has worked hard his entire life in the store. He joked and said, "I was never smart enough to get another job."
It's his dry wit and sense of humor that bring many people back, just to sit at the counter, drink a Coke and talk to a man who has many stories to tell.
He likes to sit around with some of his regulars and talk about his church, St. John Lutheran, and downtown life.
He said he remembers when the streets of downtown were packed with people on Friday and Saturday nights. Wednesday nights also brought people downtown for a band concert one block west of Main Street, he said.
Today, he said he agrees with the Downtown Business Association about problems with people on bikes and rollerblades downtown.
"I don't want to be run down," he said.
Regular customers like Irene Schenher of Kendallville come in most days to get a bite to eat and talk about days gone by.
They sit and remember old teachers and friends from high school.
At 85, he still manages to run the place himself, but the hours vary from day to day, depending on how he feels.
And after 108 years in business, it is evident that Klinkenberg still knows what is important to stay in business, as he said, "That's what counts, the repeat business."

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Downtown evolves with the times

KENDALLVILLE — Local historian Russell Frehse grimaces. The mystery baffles him.
"Where in the world did he get the money? Did he buy the land without looking at it? No streets, no stores, no homes, nothing but Indians. Not a single white man's home between Fort Wayne and Fort Dearborn, Mich., in 1829. How did he do it? That's what troubles me."
The man Frehse finds so fascinating is William Mitchell, Kendallville's founder, who bought the land and drew up the first plat in what would become the city's downtown business district.
Encouraged by the Downtown Business Association campaign to get the three-block district on the National Register of Historic Places, The News-Sun is publishing an eight-part series on the district.

The Mitchell Legacy

The evolution of Kendallville's downtown is similar to other downtowns in thousands of communities throughout the Midwest in the early 19th century.
First came the French, British and American explorers who discovered passages through the Appalachian Mountains and the fertile land beyond.
Then came the fur traders and trappers and early businessmen who established trading posts along the rivers and besides the lakes.
Pioneer families followed, looking for cheap land to cultivate and develop.
Soldiers established forts to protect the settlers from the hostile natives.
Merchants came to the forts to provide the families with their everyday needs.
Settlements sprang up near the forts. Kendallville was one of these in the early 1800s, about 25 miles north of a fort at the junction of the Maumee, St. Joseph and St. Mary's rivers.

William Mitchell

OLDEST MAIN STREET PHOTO —
This early 1860s photograph is believed to be one of the oldest taken of Kendallville's downtown business district. Shown is the northeast corner of the Main and Mitchell Street intersection, where The News-Sun is located, looking east on Mitchell Street. Note the dirt roads, board walkways, hitching posts and ditches for surface water drainage.

William Mitchell had a vision for this new settlement beside a 117-acre body of water later called Bixler Lake.
His imprint on Kendallville is more than just two east-west streets that bear his name today.
In 1836 Mitchell, his wife, Nancy Keller, and their children John and Charles, left Montgomery County, N.Y., for Indiana via the Erie Canal to Buffalo, then by steamer to Monroe, Mich. From there he came by horse and wagon to a deep forest beside a lake. An Indian village existed only a few miles to the north.
He cleared a 200-acre tract, built a double log cabin and planted crops. Swampland sold for $1.25 an acre at the time.
The enterprising pioneer saw the need for a trading center and realized the area would attract others.
In 1849, Mitchell platted 20 lots (which became the west side of the Main Street business district) and gave them away to anyone who would live on them and improve the land.
Each lot was 22 feet wide. This uniform width is still evident in adjoining Main Street buildings today.
People came.
Mitchell then laid out another block of 20 lots and then another addition.
In 1849, there were about a dozen families in the village. By 1857 this number grew to more than 300.
The trading center grew into a town that became the rival of other Noble County villages.
Mitchell became Kendallville's first postmaster of the first post office in his home at the corner of West Diamond and South Main streets (American Legion site). He helped rid the area of a gang of outlaws called the Blacklegs.
Mitchell was elected to the Indiana General Assembly, representing Noble and LaGrange counties.
In 1848, he helped initiate the construction of the plank road (Lima Plank Road, now called Lima Road or Ind. 3) from Fort Wayne to Ontario in LaGrange County.

When little money was available to pay the road workers, he orchestrated a plan to pay them in goods from Kendallville, thus boosting the town's commercial trade.

Under the company name William Mitchell & Co., he personally directed construction of 131 miles of the Ohio & Indiana Railroad, the first railroad in northeastern Indiana.

In 1860, he was elected to Congress representing the 10th District, and became a personal friend of President Abraham Lincoln.

While on a business trip in Macon, Ga., to buy cotton, the 58-year-old "Father of Kendallville" died on Sept. 11, 1865.

His son John Mitchell carried on in the Kendallville area. He farmed until 1865 when he succeeded his father as president of the First National Bank in Kendallville.

In January 1857, he married Sophronia Julia Weston of Rome City, whose father John Weston (Weston Avenue in Kendallville) was a state senator representing Noble, Kosciusko and Whitley counties.

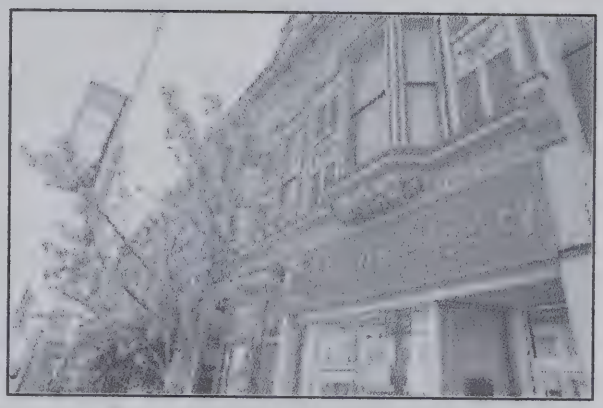
In 1867, he donated 25 acres of land that became Lake View Cemetery.

Downtown's growth

Tradesmen like blacksmiths, carpenters and bakers, professionals like doctors and pharmacists, merchants and industrialists came to Kendallville first by wagon, then by train after 1857 when the Southern Michigan and Northern Indiana Railroad passed through the growing eastern Noble County community.

Samuel Minot opened the first Main Street general store in 1840 at the northeast corner of South Main and Gold streets.

Shoemaker Ezra T. Isabell, blacksmith John Gipe and wagon maker John Finch established their businesses.



HISTORIC MAIN STREET — Among the restored historic buildings in Kendallville's downtown business district is this building at 217 S. Main St. housing the Kropp Insurance Agency and the former Timekeeper clock and antique shop. (News-Sun photo by Dean A. Orewiler)

In 1848, Luke Diggins built the first Main Street hotel, called the Callico House.

In 1849, Kendallville's first doctor, Benjamin Cissel, began seeing patients at his Main Street office and Kendallville's first attorney, James Haxby, counseled clients.

Joseph Berhalter came to Kendallville in 1860 to open the Arthur J. Berhalter Co. Furniture Store in Main Street's first brick building at 227 S. Main St. (now Corunna Bedding Co.) Coffins and furniture were made there. The building remains the downtown business district's oldest brick structure.

The three-story Kelly House at 101 S. Main St. (now Kendallville Auto Parts) was built in the mid-1860s by Harmon Krueger to accommodate visitors and newcomers departing the nearby Main Street train station. Stephen Helmer first operated the hotel, and then John Kelly acquired the building after Helmer's death. The Kelly House became headquarters for many traveling salesmen frequenting northeast Indiana.

In 1919, the building was remodeled into a furniture store. Atz Furniture took over the building in 1937. It

also housed Moore Furniture, Chappell Furniture and Mortuary (1922) and the Central Hotel owned by William Sprandel.

Fred G. Hess epitomizes the determination to succeed of Kendallville's early Main Street business owners who started with practically nothing.

He came to the U.S. from Germany in 1882 with $3 in his pocket. He traveled from New York to Toledo, Ohio, and in 1885 came to Kendallville.

Hess worked for grocer Jacob Kaiser for three years before starting his own successful bakery at 211 S. Main St.

Besides the Fred Hess Bakery, this building where The Bargain Shop is currently located has housed: Marie Waggoner's Dress Shop, Miss Irey's Millinery & Gifts (1947), Guy Burger's Tavern, the City Bakery (1927) and the J.W. Thompson Bakery (1916-1922).

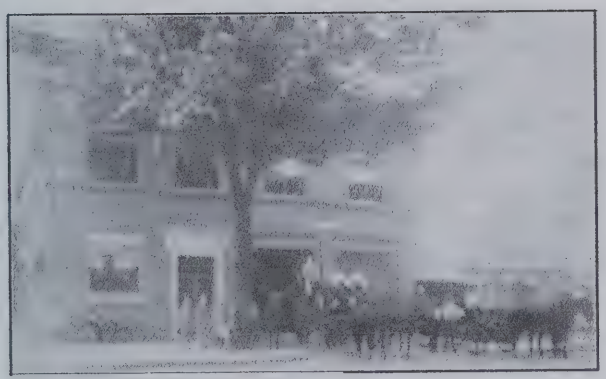
Main Street prospered with livery stables, harness shops, general stores, saloons and taverns, men's and women's apparel stores, eating establishments and doctor's offices.

Boarded sidewalks kept pedestrians out of the dirt street, and open ditches along the street collected stormwater.

Women wore bonnets and long skirts. They sometimes attached bits of leather to the inside of their skirt bottoms to prevent snagging in wooden walkways and to keep the skirts from blowing open in windy conditions.

Fine gentlemen wore wool trousers, vests, waist coats and tophats. Many had beards and mustaches.

William Mitchell, along with Henry Hitchcock, started the First National Bank in 1858 at 132 S. Main St. that became Campbell & Fetter Bank in 1894 when Archie Campbell, who married Kate Mitchell, and Jacob Fetter took over.



FIRST CITY HALL — This 1912 photo shows Kendallville's first City Hall at the northwest corner of Main and Rush streets. The building was destroyed by fire in 1913 and the present City Hall building was completed on the same site in 1914. Note the bell tower at left, fire wagon and at right the Airdome, an outdoor theater. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

The community's first newspaper, the Noble County Star, was first published in 1849 by William H. Austin in Samuel Minot's general store.

Kendallville was named after Amos Kendall, the county's first postmaster general.

In 1863, this growing community was incorporated as a town. Three years later it was officially declared a city when Kendallville's first City Council meeting was held.

The northwest corner of Main and William streets has been a part of the downtown business district's history for more than 140 years.

A feed barn occupied the lot in the 1850s before a Masonic hall was built.

In 1863, William Mitchell replaced the three-story Masonic hall with a three-story brick building that became known as the Mitchell Block.

The feed barn was moved to 127 W. William St. where Uhl's garage is now located. It was eventually torn down to make way for the famous band shell where the community band, directed by L.E. McCartney, performed weekly for the public.

The Mitchell Block's top story was removed in the 1950s following a storm that damaged the roof.

The building has housed several businesses and professional offices, such as the First National Bank; Lohman's Store, selling retail and wholesale drugs; the H.D. Ward Store, selling coats, shoes and dry goods; a hardware store; wool exchange office; a grocery; and even a theater.

The third floor housed the Kendallville Boys Club and Mitchell Hall, site of many public meetings. Noted Indiana poet James Whitcomb Riley once spoke and recited his poetry to an audience in Mitchell Hall.

George Studebaker, of the Studebaker car factory in South Bend, spoke to the Kendallville Commercial Club (later becoming the Chamber of Commerce) in Mitchell Hall.

The building now houses Ebey's TV & Appliances and Mr. B's Sports & Design.

Early businessmen

Alonso Anderson, an African-American, operated a barbershop in the Mitchell Block's basement in the late 1800s, but wanted his own barbershop building.

Anderson saved enough money to build an 18-foot-wide building in an empty lot in the 100 block of North Main Street between what is now the south half of KeyBank and the Ryher Hotel (Kendall Hotel), now the bank parking lot.

That building, constructed in 1893, is now the north half of the bank.

John Gappinger was the first merchant who built a brick store downtown. His two-story building at 201 S. Main St., built in 1863, housed his harness shop. Civil War officers met several times on the second floor, according to longtime Kendallville businessman Robert Klinkenberg.

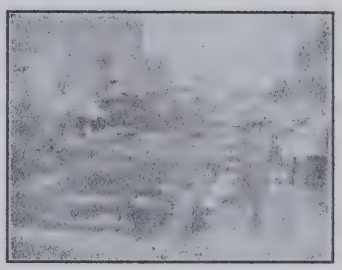
In 1889, Klinkenberg's father opened a drug store at the site, and the 85-year-old Klinkenberg is now the proprietor, making the store with a soda fountain the oldest continuous family-run business in the downtown district.

Prominent Jewish German immigrants Moses Jacobs and Jacob Keller came to Kendallville in the 1850s.

They founded J. Keller & Co., one of the most important mercantile businesses in northeast Indiana in the mid-1800s.

The Keller building, at the southwest corner of Main and William streets (now Reick Insurance and the Douglas Atz law office) became a beehive of commerce in Kendallville, and the home of businesses over the years like the Suntan Genie/Video Genie (1985), Mal's Tavern (1982), American Discount (1972-1981), Firestone Store, Miller's Department Store (1938) and Uhlman's Department Store (1929-1932).

Keller opened a private banking firm in 1889 and later founded Noble County Bank. He also helped establish other banks in the area, including Auburn State Bank, Farmers and Merchants Bank in LaOtto, and Kendallville Trust & Savings Bank.



MUDDY STREET — Kendallville's Main Street in the 1880s featured mud puddles and wagon wheel ruts in the dirt road, canopied storefronts and board walks. Note the horse and wagons and barber pole at lower right. (Photo provided by Russell Frehse)

Jacobs' son, Abraham M. Jacobs, was born in Kendallville in 1864 and sent to Germany for his education. He returned to Kendallville, married Jacob Keller's daughter, and eventually became president of Noble County Bank.

Fourteen-year-old Casper Vetter left Germany in 1877 to join his mother in Kendallville. He traveled alone by ship across the Atlantic Ocean to New York, then by train to Chicago.

In Chicago, the young Vetter needed help in finding his way to Kendallville. A conductor attempted to help, but didn't speak German. He found an interpreter who explained the teen-age boy's destination was Kendallville.

The conductor wrote "Kendallville" on a piece of paper and strung it around the young Vetter's neck.

He found his way to Kendallville and became a prominent businessman and civic promoter.

Casper Vetter operated a saloon with his brother Ed, and then a bakery at 104 S. Main St. (now Friendship Crafts) in the early 1900s. He also played the tuba in the city band for holidays, special celebrations and weekly free community concerts in the band shell in the 100 block of West William Street.

Irene Schenher, 79, of Kendallville, Vetter's granddaughter, recalls the bakery's sweet delights when she was a young girl.

"I enjoyed the big sugar cookies and German coffee cakes, that nobody makes anymore," she said.

At least 11 barbers operated downtown at one time, according to Bob Frick, owner of the Family Shears,

130 S. Main St., and the only Main Street barber today still cutting hair.
The first City Hall was built in 1904 at the northwest corner of Main and Rush streets. A fire destroyed the building in 1914 and it was rebuilt in 1915.
About this time Main Street became a brick north-south thoroughfare. The early Model T Fords bumped along at 15-20 mph. The brick is still visible in a few areas where some of today's asphalt surface has cracked.
In the Sept. 16, 1936, issue of The News-Sun, Frank S. Weber, a Kendallville resident for 50 years, described Main Street in the 1880s: "In those days our streets were a mass of mud, our walkways were wooden and our street lamps were oil burners. Later came the arc lights, then the boulevard lights, miles of paved streets and a sewage system."

The Great Depression

Kendallville's downtown business district, like the whole country, suffered through the Great Depression in the early 1930s.
Unemployment was high, financial institutions like Noble County Bank & Trust Co. closed, and people lost their life savings.
The Citizens National Bank on Main Street paid its depositors in full, then closed.
Retailers survived by lowering their prices. Pork chops sold for 8 cents a pound in 1933 and 4 pounds of hamburger costs 19 cents.
City Council created the Welfare Council to aid depression-stricken citizens with low-interest loans.
After World War II, returning soldiers started new businesses in downtown Kendallville, and the city enjoyed a population boom.
Christianson Jewelers (1949), Westphal's Cafe (1948), Diehl's Sporting Goods (1951), Culligan Water Conditioning (1948), Selleck's Department Store (1954), G.C. Murphy (1951), Kirkwood's (1952), Barker's Jewelry (1956) and Gamble's (1953) were just some of the new stores that opened in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

'63 Centennial event

In the summer of 1963, Kendallville's Centennial Celebration took place downtown with carnival rides, a pet parade, the Kendallville High School Marching Band under the direction of Clyde Copeland, citizens dressed in 19th century garb, a beard contest, a kangaroo court and jail, and a beauty pageant with Susan Taylor being crowned Centennial Queen and Paul King, WAWK–AM 1140's morning celebrity, as master of ceremonies.
"One of the old-fashioned pieces of Americana we don't see too often anymore is the town centennial," said the narrator of a WANE-TV "Vista '63" television program on Kendallville's centennial celebration.
"For most of the other communities which make up the Midwest and East that once-in-a-lifetime celebration has come and gone, but there are a few left. One of these occurred a few weeks ago in Kendallville."
When asked about the Centennial Celebration, Mayor Rudolph Rehwinkel said on the program, "It's an outstanding example of what people can do when working together for one purpose."
At one time there were two popcorn wagons and a popcorn stand on Kendallville's Main Street. It was easier to go downtown and buy popcorn than it was to pop it at home.
The best-known popcorn stand was located at the northwest corner of the Main and William street intersection.
Wade Baughman operated the stand in the 1920s and 1930s.
A large bag of buttered popcorn costs 10 cents and a small bag was 5 cents. A scoop of peanuts, usually "redskins" on top, was an extra 5 cents.
"I remember getting hard tack (cooked but unpopped popcorn) for free at the popcorn stand with my sisters

and girlfriends before going to a concert at the band shell," said Edythe (Franze) Nartker.
"The butter would soak through the paper bag," said Phil W. Kaufman in his book "In the Beginning: Memories of an Indiana Boyhood."
The popcorn stand continued operating through the 1950s and 1960s with a drive-up window for vehicle convenience. Many local residents in their 40s and 50s will remember Mrs. Cogan, the smiling, gray-haired elderly woman who bagged the popcorn in the 1950s and 1960s.
The stand was removed in the late 1960s because it became a traffic hazard. So many vehicles stopped at the stand they caused a traffic jam, according to resident John Cain.

MAGGART'S GROCERY STORE —
Kendallville's Main Street business district has featured several grocery stores over the years. Here is a photo of the interior of Maggart's Grocery, 103 N. Main St. (now the Sportsman Bar & Grill). Harry Ziebell is at right with his father, Frank Ziebell, directly behind him. Others are unidentified. Note the glass display cases, shelves of canned goods and preserving jars at lower left. (Photo contributed by Margie Misselhorn)

New challenges

Downtown Kendallville faced a new challenge in the 1960s — shopping centers. The Foodtown shopping center (Town Center) opened along U.S. 6 on the city's north side, followed by the nearby Publix Village Square shopping center in the 1970s.
Anchored by supermarkets and offering a greater variety of food and merchandise at cheaper prices, these shopping centers drew customers away from the downtown groceries, meat markets, hardware stores and apparel shops.
Businesses like Haffner's 5 & 10 and Kirkwood's later moved to Publix. Others closed, like Gamble's, Western Auto, the A&P grocery store, Cox's Meat Market and Lord's or reduced staff and overhead expenses and carried on promoting friendly customer service and convenient parking.
A third shopping center — Fairview — anchored by Wal-Mart and Scott's Foods, opened on the city's east side in 1990, attracting even more customers away from the downtown area.
Buildings that once housed apparel stores, groceries and banks now house antique and gift shops, lawyer offices and insurance agencies.
The three-block business district has no full-service restaurant, no sporting equipment store, no grocery store, only two clothing stores, no accessible public restrooms, not even a bench to sit on.
And yet it survives. An active Downtown Business Association holds promotions like Sidewalk Sale Days and a Christmas parade, and erects holiday banners.
In 1959, merchants and downtown property owners raised $50,000 for an off-street parking program when on-street parking became a problem and store employees complained they had no place to park.

Old buildings behind the 200 block of South Main Street were torn down to make space for city parking lots off of State and Orchard streets.
Parking meter revenue was used to maintain the lots.
Ten years ago City Council used a $40,000 grant to install a decorative brick strip, brick flower planters, brick walls and black, iron bollards as part of a downtown revitalization project.
In 1990, council created the Redevelopment Commission to oversee funds for downtown economic improvements through a special tax increment financing district.
The commission spent $17,000 planting flowering pear trees, installing grates around the trees and underground electrical wiring for Christmas lighting.
Last year the commission spent $50,000 replacing the crumbling red brick sidewalk striping.
Last year council has decided to keep the old City Hall building while considering plans for a new, more efficient and handicapped-accessible building.
Since 1992, downtown merchants and business owners have joined with Apple Festival of Kendallville organizers to create Main Street Village, a recreation of Kendallville's Main Street in the 1860s.
The vacant Jade Buddha Restaurant at 123 N. Main St. and former site of the V&A Restaurant is being demolished to make way for a new video store building.
Regal's Outlet Store, a women's apparel shop, opened May 1 at 133 S. Main St.
The vacant Timekeeper building at 215 S. Main St. has been sold.
The Main Street business community continues to change, but the historic building exteriors largely have remained unchanged.
A state historian surveying the downtown for its historical value describe's Kendallville's business district as "remarkably intact" and one of the best examples of small-town architecture in Indiana.
Personal memories and the black and white, faded photos of the people, businesses and special occasions that helped shape Kendallville's downtown are all that is left in many cases.

FORMER KENDALLVILLE LANDMARK — The Kendall Hotel was the last surviving hotel in Kendallville's downtown business district before its demolition in 1976. The hotel was located where the KeyBank parking lot is now in the 100 block of North Main Street. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Downtown pharmacy remains in Fischer family

By CHAD SIEVERS

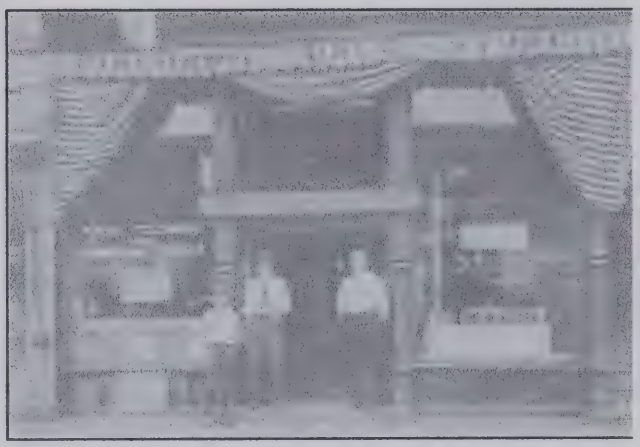
KENDALLVILLE — After not being in downtown Kendallville since 1969, Fischer Family Pharmacy returned and has been back in its place on Main Street since 1993.

Located in the old J.C. Penney's building, 112-114 S. Main St., Fischer Family Pharmacy has been in continuous operation in Indiana since the late 1880s, said Sandi Fischer, wife of present owner Craig Fischer, and also owner of Glad Tidings Books 'n' Gifts.

Henry Fischer, the founder of the store, moved to Kendallville to open the drug store in 1913 on Main Street after establishing the first Fischer drug store in Nappanee.

Henry's youngest son, Hubert, took over the store after his father unexpectedly died in 1923. Hubert had been studying to become a doctor, Sandi Fischer said.

Hubert affectionately was called "Doc" Fischer by many people in the community because of his knowledge in



FISCHER'S BEGINNING — Henry Fischer, pictured right, established the first Fischer Pharmacy i 107 S. Main St. in 1902. Here he stands in front of the store. Fischer Pharmacy is now a third-generation stor that has been in the downtown area for more than 70 y

Downtown pharmacy reopens in Fincher family

remedies, she added.

Fischer drug store was known not only for its prescription medicines and over-the-counter health products, but also for its wide variety of merchandise. People could walk into the downtown store and get everything from veterinary applications to ukulele strings, she said.

By the late 1940s, Craig Fischer, the young nephew of Hubert, began working in the store.

"I was an errand boy and a janitor essentially," Craig Fischer said. Then in high school, he became interested in science and decided to pursue pharmacy.

Craig Fischer graduated from Purdue Pharmacy School and served in the Army. In 1960 he returned to Kendallville and purchased the store from Hubert, who continued to help out. Craig Fischer said he wanted to continue the "family tradition" and decided to buy the store. At this time the store was moved from 107 S. Main St. to 120 S. Main St.

In 1964, Fischer decided to add a second store in the new Publix Village Square shopping center on Kendallville's north side. In 1969, he continued to expand when he opened a store in Albion.

Later that year Craig Fischer decided to close the downtown Kendallville store and expand the Publix store because the location offered more space.

In 1974, Fischer Family Pharmacy continued to grow when it added yet another store, in Avilla in the basement of the Family Medical Clinic. It was this store that began to service the area nursing homes.

It was in December 1989 that Fischer Family Pharmacy moved out of the Publix location, Sandi Fischer said. About five months later a new store was opened in Wolcottville where the old Maye's Pharmacy was located.

After nearly 28 years away from the downtown Kendallville area, Fischer Family Pharmacy returned on Jan. 1, 1993, to 112-114 S. Main St. in the former J.C. Penney's building.

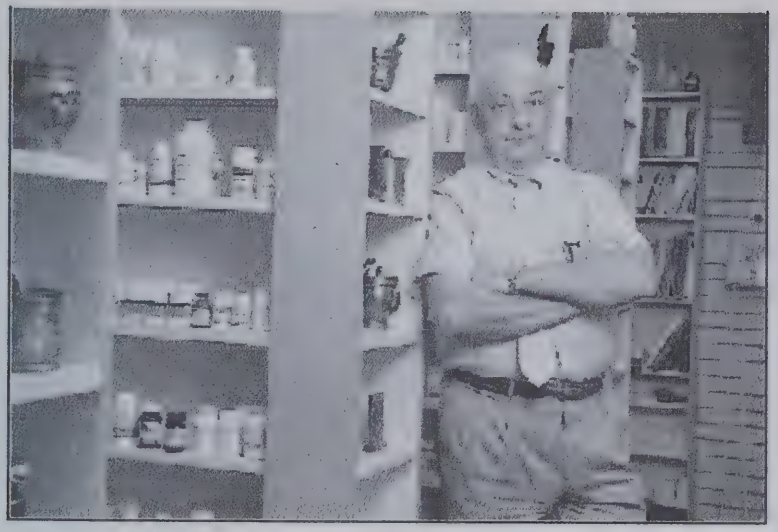
Furthermore, the nursing home services were moved to the basement area of the Kendallville store.

"This (downtown) was where we started and it was available," he said about his decision to close the Wolcottville store and move back to the downtown area.

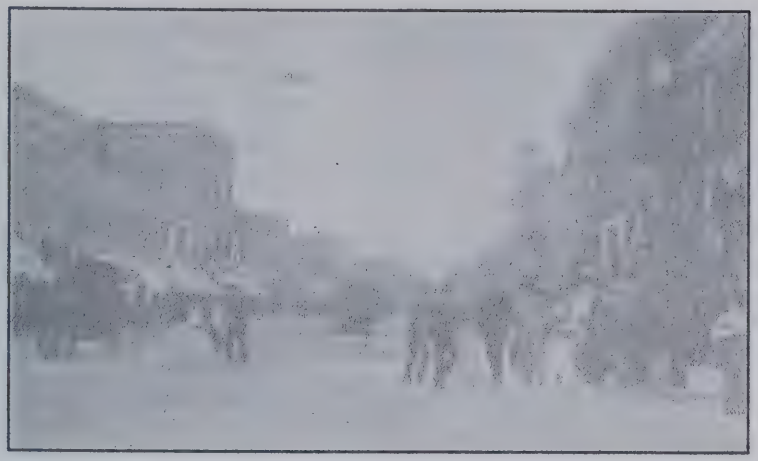
Meanwhile, the Fischers opened a gift store, Glad Tidings Books 'n' Gifts in 1990, at 113 S. Main St.

The Fischers are parents of three children, Jamie Witte, Sarah Lannon and Jaren Fischer.

AUTHENTIC JEWELRY STORE — Dave Christianson, owner of Christianson Jewelry, Inc., stan beside the authentic cases that were built by Louis Beckman, an original jeweler in the store. The cases ho watches, rings, necklaces and other jewelry items in th store. (News-Sun photo by Dean Orewiler)



Craig Fischer is a third-generation downtown Kendallville pharmacist. He bought the business from his uncle, Hubert "Doc" Fischer, in the 1960s. Craig's grandfather, Henry, founded the business in 1913.
News-Sun photo by Dean A. Orewiler



EARLY MAIN STREET — This early 1900s photo of Kendallville's Main Street business district looking north from the Rush Street intersection shows Model T Fords competing for space on the road with horses and wagons. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

J.C. PENNEY'S — The J.C. Penney's store in downtown Kendallville was located at 112-114 S. Main St. It's now where Fischer Family Pharmacy is located. This photo was taken in the 1940s.(Contributed by Russell Frehse)

BALL TEAM SEND-OFF — Kendallville's city baseball team in the 1920s gets a rousing send-off in front of the dining car and Bowman Garage located on North Main Street at the site of the former V&A Restaurant and Jade Buddha Restaurant. The Ryher Hotel is at the left. Note players in their uniforms in the Model T Fords. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

Old Kendall Hotel (where KeyBank lot is today), North Main Street.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Residents recall unforgettable downtown characters

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — "Main Street is a lawyer's office, a newsstand, a Coke date, a stray dog, dodging downtown traffic. It's a men's store, a boys store, a baby shop and a ladies' ready-to-wear. It's green, amber and red lights, complete with walk and wait.

Main Street is a dentist's chair, a shoe shine, a haircut, a bag of popcorn and parallel parking.

It's a movie house, a hardware store and a harangue on the corner, a bottle of booze and a brisket of beef.

Main Street is more, too. It's a Memorial Day parade, a Christmas tree land of lights.

Even more, Main Street symbolizes security. As long as there is a Main Street, there is the nation." — wrote Norman Carter in "The History of Kendallville and Noble County, 1863-1963," an insert to The News-Sun. (A longtime resident, Carter resides on South Morton Street.)

Kendallville's historic Main Street business district is three blocks long and about 1,500 feet from Rush Street north to the railway tracks.

An individual walking at a brisk pace can negotiate the distance in about three to four minutes if the two pedestrian lights are green.

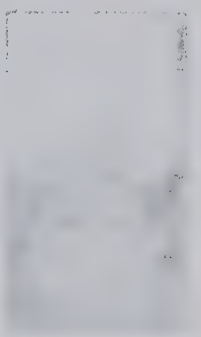
Why let over 160 years of history pace by so quickly?

Pause and stare at every storefront. The restored facades have a timeless quality.

If these buildings could talk, they'd tell us about downtown characters like Sassafras John, Brickley Lawson, Fred Marti, George Vlahakis, Kenny Blech and Cleon Point that passed their way.

Irene Schener shares memories

Merchant Bob



They'd speak about the stores and businesses in their spaces, like Gutelier's Store, J.C. Penney's, G.C. Murphy's, Cox's Meat Market, Westphal's Restaurant, Nartker's Restaurant, the Kemery Bakery, Morris 5 & 10 Store and Charlie Blumer's Drug Store.

How about the time Buffalo Bill rode through town? Remember the Christmas tree each Christmas in the center of the Main and William streets intersection?

The buildings can't talk, but current and former Kendallville citizens can who remember fondly the downtown characters, stores and special occasions.

"That big man who had a horse and wagon, I was afraid when he came to town. When we were kids we were afraid of him," said Irene Schenher, 79, of Kendallville, when asked about downtown's characters from the past.

Schenher, Bob Klinkenberg, 85, and Russell Frehse, 87, recently sat down at a table in Klinkenberg's store and talked about their memories of Kendallville's downtown.

Surrounded by unusual sale items, a marble soda fountain and glass display cases that make Klinkenberg's the oldest and most unique store in Kendallville, these citizens joggled their memories.

There was Sassafras John Bates, made famous by the late Arthur Franklin Mapes, Indiana's poet laureate and Kendallville native, in his poem "The Blacklegs."

"I can remember watching old John Bates walk by and the kids would tag him and say mean things to him because he tried to get enough money when he came to town to buy a drink of booze," said Frehse. "His home was way out east near the DeKalb County line."

Schenher remembers as a little girl coming uptown on Saturdays to pay the grocery bills. She always stopped at Vetter's Bakery, 104 S. Main St., started by her grandfather Casper Vetter.

"I enjoyed the big sugar cookies and German coffee cakes," she said.

Pat Carteaux of Kendallville also remembers Vetter's Bakery that became Kemery Bakery in 1949.

"Vetter's made the best pecan rolls in the world," she said.

Phyllis V. Smith of Kendallville calls Vetter's Bakery the best smelling store on Main Street.

"My dad always stopped for cinnamon rolls to have with our coffee and milk when we got home on Saturday nights," she said.

Pam Bailey of Kendallville liked Kemery's jelly rolls.

"Ted Kemery would go in the bakery around 3 a.m. and make the rolls. You could go there early Saturday morning and the bakery smelled of yeast and warm flour. He always had a smile even at that hour in the morning."

At the Palace of Sweets she bought 35-cent tin roof sundaes.

"That was my favorite. My father would give me 50 cents for the weekend and that would pay for a movie and a tin roof. That was a lot of money for a teen-ager then," she said.

Frehse worked at Nartker's Cafe, 107 N. Main St. (now Business Service Company of America) mopping the floor and wiping the windows.

Fred Marti, a city police officer who walked Main Street in the 1920s and 1930s, was an imposing figure, according to Frehse, Schenher and Klinkenberg.

Klinkenberg

Historian Russell

Frehse

CHARLIE BLUMER'S DRUG STORE — Charlie Blumer's Drug Store, in this 1940s photo, was one of the popular places in downtown Kendallville to find relief from hot summer nights. The store had air-conditioning. From left are Charles Blumer and Lauren Eckhart. (Photo contributed by Sharon Stark)

"He was a big man with huge hands. He could lift a 60-pound bag of wheat and put it on his shoulders," said Frehse.

The city Christmas tree erected in the intersection of Main and William streets outside Klinkenberg's store in the 1920s was a popular holiday tradition.

"They took the manhole cover out and put a great big tree in there, then built a rack around it," said Frehse. Santa Claus visited with children at the tree and people donated gifts and food under the tree.

One of Kendallville's most generous downtown characters, and a man who received national acclaim for his charity, was Lawson Brickley, proprietor of Lawson's Diner.

Located just south of the Corunna Bedding Co. building on the east side of Main Street (now Lookin' Good Auto Detailing), the diner had a 13-stool counter service with a grill and large coffee urn.

Irene Chilcote of Pleasant Lake remembers a 2-inch counter pan filled with smoked sausage 24 hours a day. She worked at the diner in the mid- and late-1940s.

At the far end of the counter were two meat stands with roast pork and roast beef.

"He sold many sandwiches and was well-known. People from all walks of life entered his little diner at some time or other," she said.

On Dec. 22, 1931, in the midst of the nation's Great Depression, Brickley began a charitable endeavor that would take him to New York City and national radio.

He began serving free meals to the poor, the transient, the hobos, and the destitute, provided they could recite the Lord's Prayer.

"Now if they did not know the Lord's Prayer, he would give them a card he had printed up with the prayer on it. He would send them away and tell them to come back when they learned it and he would give them a meal," said Chilcote. "That really amazed me the first time I saw him do that."

Lawson's unique generosity gained nationwide attention in May 1937 when he appeared on NBC radio's "We the People" program to explain why he gave free meals to the homeless and beggars.

According to the May 13, 1937, News-Sun, Lawson told the nation it was through the patronage of citizens at his diner that he was able to hand out free meals.

Lawson taught

Chilcote how to fry eggs to help with the busy breakfast shift.
"You see, the grill was very slippery and the minute I would crack an egg onto it the egg would slide into the grease trap. Mr. Lawson worked with me for an hour to teach me how to fry an egg on the grill. I can still see it as if it were yesterday," Chilcote said.
Lawson's unique character was also obvious at lunch time. He had a large dinner bell on a pole outside the diner. At noon he would climb the pole and ring the bell for everyone to hear, according to Chilcote.
Cleon Point, former manager of the Strand Theatre, 221 S. Main St. should not be overlooked on the roll of honor of downtown's unique characters.
His scowling face and growling, angry voice set many a misbehaving teen-ager back in his seat.
For five decades Point's life was the theater business, including a stint as a vaudeville stage hand. He went to work at the Strand Theatre in 1946.
He was the first manager to bring

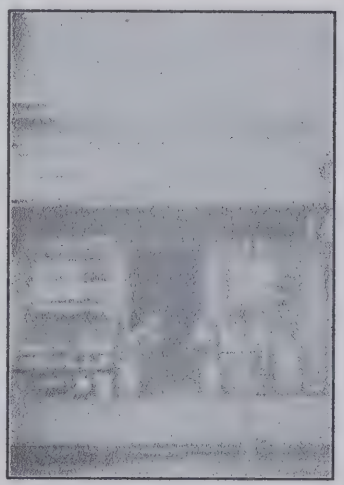
popcorn and candy to the Strand and conducted everything from stage shows, hoola-hoop contests and give-away drawings to attract crowds.

In an article in the Nov. 16, 1989, News-Sun, Point recalled one time when he was prepared to scold a woman in the theater with a crying baby.

He heard the baby screaming and marched down the aisle to try and rectify the problem.

As he knelt down to tell the mother to "shut the kid up," he noticed the mother was breast-feeding the baby. As Point described the situation, the well-endowed woman, furious at him, flipped one of her breasts back toward him, nearly knocking him off his feet and filling his face with the milky-white substance.

Howard Reick, 92, downtown Kendallville's oldest active businessman, remembers the day his father, Michael Reick, gave him a beer at the Kelly House (now Kendallville Auto Parts), 101 S. Main St. "My dad gave me a beer in a shot glass there once after we



EARLY GROCERY — One of downtown Kendallville's popular 19th century groceries was Kaiser's Grocery at 120 S. Main St., shown here in 1875. Store owner and founder John Kaiser is shown on the left. His son George Kaiser, 13, is on the right. A poster in the window promotes "Wallace & Co.'s Great World Menagerie & Museum." (Photo provided by Phil Kaiser)

paid our grocery bill at the Colonial Grocery Store," he said.

One of Sharon Stark's first summer jobs in 1947 was working in Charlie Blumer's Drug Store, 111 S. Main St. (now Stroman Electronics).

"I was really excited about going to work in Charlie Blumer's store because they had recently remodeled and put in air conditioning. That was my idea of heaven," she said. "On hot Saturday nights people poured into the store to cool off and have a sundae or soda. As many as seven girls would work behind the soda fountain on a busy night."

Main Street was action central on Saturday nights.

"My favorite memory of downtown Kendallville was coming to town on a Saturday night in the early 1960s," recalls Kathy (Hasselman) Young. "My parents and I would come early to find a parking space. Dad and I walked to the popcorn stand at the corner of Main and William streets to get our favorite popcorn — Dad's was with peanuts and Mom's and mine with extra butter. Then we would walk back to the car,

eat our popcorn and keep track how many times my brother drove by."

BUFFALO BILL —
"Buffalo Bill" Cody is shown here cruising through Kendallville in 1914 with his wild west show. The Kelly House hotel at 101 S. Main St. (Kendallville Auto Parts) is in the background. Cody was born in 1846 when Iowa was considered the western frontier. He died in 1917. (Photo by Harry Ziebell and contributed by his daughter Margie Misselhorn).

Gladys Gardner of Kendallville says some people on Saturdays would park their cars on Main Street, walk home for supper and come back, assured they had their favorite parking spots to watch people go by.

As a little girl, Marie E. Schwartz of Kendallville went uptown on Saturday nights with her parents clutching a dime she could spend.

"I remember holding that dime in my hand until it was time to go home, then we'd go to Wright's Ice Cream store, 115 E. Rush St., and get a half-pint of maple nut ice cream."

Pamela Mortimore Bryant has fond memories of the G.C. Murphy's store, 106 and 108 S. Main St. (now Weible's Paint & Wallpaper).

"Murphy's was a special place to me as a young girl. My mother was employed there for nearly 50 years. To me she was Murphy's," said Bryant.

Murphy's was the place to shop in the 1950s and 1960s. Shopping there was socializing for many people.

"Men would gather near the front doors (waiting for their wives to finish shopping) and talk about everything from farm crops, to politics and the weather. As they talked they ate from sacks of roasted redskin peanuts or cashews," she said.

At 8:55 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights, store management played a recording of Kate Smith singing "God Bless America" indicating to shoppers the store was closing.

"Kendallville's downtown was a wonderful place to work and grow up," said Bryant.

Downtown visitors sometimes stayed at the Kendall Hotel, (now the KeyBank parking lot) in the 100 block of North Main Street.

June Phillips of Kendallville worked there in 1944 as a waitress and remembers why she soon learned the location of the hotel restrooms.

"One day a lady came in for dinner and asked where the restrooms were," Phillips remembers. "I was new on the job and couldn't answer her question and told her to ask at the front desk. She looked at me and said 'Hmm, you just work here.'"

As a young boy, Ray Kurtz of Kendallville would go to the barbershop below the Kendall Hotel, read the newspaper sports pages and comics and watch traveling salesmen get their haircuts.

Rimmell's Hat Shop, 133 S. Main St. (now Regal's Outlet Store), was where women would gather in the 1940s to have their hats trimmed with bows, flowers and ribbons, according to Virginia B. Sigler of Wildwood, Fla.

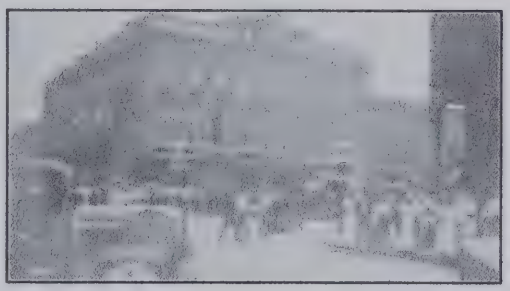
The candy counter in the Morris 5 & 10 Cent Store, 110 S. Main St. (now Weible's Paint & Wallpaper) was one of the popular downtown stores on Saturday nights.

Alice Swogger of Kendallville worked behind the counter.

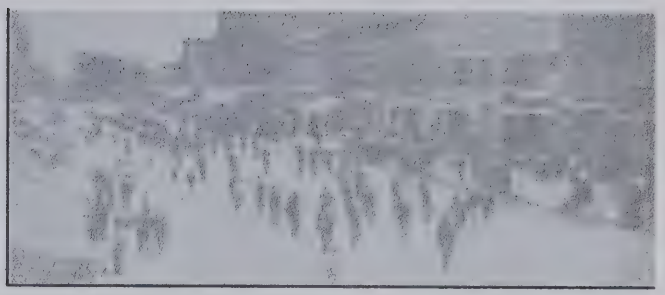
"It was a dizzy pace waiting on customers lined up three deep to buy a nickel's worth of jawbreakers or a half-pound of chunk chocolate. Starting pay was 30 cents an hour. We were afraid to snitch a piece of candy because the manager was George Kirkwood, and his reprimands were swift and caustic."

Mayor Larry McGahen recalls a fire at the Kaiser Grocery when his father, Bill McGahen, was a volunteer with the fire department.

"I can remember going uptown to watch the fire and hearing one of the firefighters say we can't find McGahen. I ran home crying and telling my mother. We learned that Dad was upstairs fighting the fire and left the building using the rear stairs." Lucky's Tavern, Banner Grocery, Sellick's, The Mode, The Toggery, The Melody Bar, Vanderburg's Meat Market, J.C. Penney's, Burger's Tavern, Carney Henry's Barber Shop, Gutelius Drug Store, Seagly's Hardware, Miss Irie's Gift Shop, Swartzlander's Jewelry, Butch's Novelty Shop, Skinner's Sewing Center, Haffner's 5 & 10, The Cinderella, Stemen's Cafe



MAIN STREET CROWDS — This photo of downtown Kendallville in the 1920s shows the Kelly House hotel (now Kendallville Auto Parts) at the corner of Main and Mitchell streets. Note the crowded streets, angle parking and decorative streetlights. (Photo taken by Harry Ziebell and provided by Margie Misselhorn)



DOWNTOWN CELEBRATION — This historic photo taken in the 1920s of Kendallville's downtown business district shows a band leading a parade. Note the view looking south with the tower on top of the Keller building, sometimes referred to as the Spindler building (now the Northeastern Center) in the 200 block of South Main Street. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

and Campbell Co. Dry Goods are among the hundreds of different businesses over the years that characterized Kendallville's Main Street business district.

Parades, political rallies and holiday celebrations, windows painted KHS red and gold, then East Noble High School blue and gold, angle parking, then parallel parking, crowds of shoppers, then skateboarders and rollerbladers, hobby shops and coffee shops, then video stores, baseball cards and the Olympia Sweet Shoppe returns.

So many memories, so many changes.

Frehse, whose documentation of local history is unmatched by any other, says it best: ''Don't quote me, quote the source. In the Bible in Ecclesiastes, it says, 'That which has been is that which shall be. There is nothing new under the sun.'''

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Movies, music brought people to Main Street

Movies, music brought people to Main Street

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — To get away from the hard times of the Great Depression, Kendallville's citizens jammed Main Street's three movie theaters in the 1930s and 1940s.

In 1933 the Strand Theatre featured Marlene Dietrich in "Blonde Venus." Admission was 10 cents for children, 25 cents for balcony seats and 30 cents for the main floor.

Ed and Marjorie Misselhorn recall how busy Kendallville's Main Street was 40 to 50 years ago.

"Oh the people," said Marjorie. "Saturday was the busiest shopping day and the time when people paid their bills. But you know, so many people came downtown just to park, talk and watch other people. Why they would come early, park their cars, walk home to eat lunch and come back so they didn't lose their parking spot."

The weekly band concerts in the band shell on Thursday nights attracted huge crowds. Seats were provided and people stopped at the nearby popcorn stand for a snack before the concert.

Edythe (Franze) Nartker attended the concerts as a young girl in the 1920s with her sisters and girlfriends.

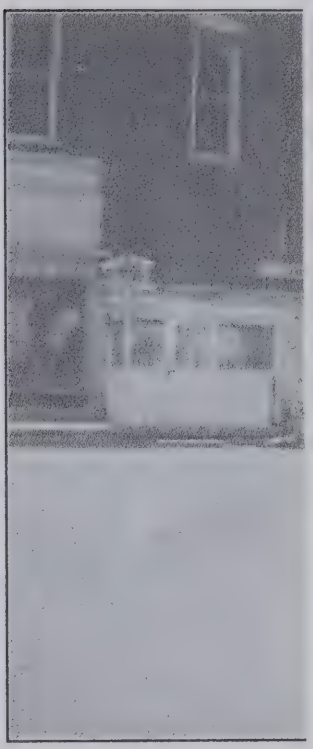
"We'd go over to the popcorn stand nearby and get some free hard-tack before going to the concert," she said. Hard-tack was cooked popcorn kernels that didn't pop.

Seventy-eight-year-old Irene Schenher's grandfather Casper Vetter played a tuba horn in the community band.

"I have a book of music they played in the 1920s," he said. "The weekly concerts were popular. A lot of people went."

COUNTY FAIR TIME — A group of musicians march down Ken Street business district at the turn of the century as part of the county f The view is from the Main and William streets intersection looking nor contributed by Russell Frehse)

An article in The News-Sun in 1926 described a community band concert:
"With ideal weather for the weekly event, the crowd arrived early and one hour before the concert started all the parking spaces were taken. The seating space was more than half filled.
"At 8 o'clock when the concert started, the pavilion lot was crowded.
"The delightful numbers by the band were interspersed by features which included a harmonica solo by Herbert Dickinson; vocal solo by Miss Pauline Kline; whistling solos by LeVon Henney and the song and dancing specialty by Angelo, the black boy of the Sally Lou Steppers."
Jean (Stiver) Cochard of Kendallville remembers how many people sat in their cars, lined up on William Street to the railway tracks and along Orchard Street, to hear the music.
"When a number was finished, all would honk their horns in appreciation," she said. "A few of those talented band members I can recall are Harold Edwards, Fred Johnson and Chet Throp. Later they added a young trumpeter named Eddie Smith."



POPCORN CORNER — These popcorn stands were located across the street from each other.The one pictured at left sat at the northwest corner of William and Main streets. stand was at the southeast William and Main Streets. contributed by James Jar

BANDSTAND — Weekly band concerts were popular community gatherings in Kendallville in the 1930s. The city band performed in the band shell, shown here, at the corner of William and Orchard streets.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Sweets attracted teens to downtown hangouts

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — The Olympia Sweet Shop, the Palace of Sweets, Valenti's Candy Store and the Central Drug Store were four favorite downtown Kendallville teen hangouts over the years.

George Vlahakis operated the Olympia Sweet Shop in the 1920s at 109 S. Main St. (now Stroman's Electronics). Before the sweet shop it was William Swogger's Grocery, U.C. Brouse Grocery and John Hendley's jewelry store. Harold Smith took over the sweet shop in 1945. Ken Stark operated a Baskin-Robbins ice cream shop next door at 107 S. Main St. for many years before Jeff Smith, Harold

Sn cels attracted teens to downtown hangouts

Smith's son, purchased that building in 1996 and restored its original name, Olympia Sweet Shop. He now sells sandwiches, soups and ice cream desserts.
Vlahakis lived above his shop, recalls Jean Cochard, a common practice for many downtown merchants.
Mary Parker of Kendallville has fond memories of the Greek shop owner.
Her father drove a bus between Fort Wayne and Kalamazoo, Mich., for Central Coach Lines in the late 1930s and early 1940s. The bus stop was in front of the Olympia.
Parker would stand inside the store by the door waiting for the bus and her father.
"Mr. Vlahakis was very kind. He would give me a big chunk of milk chocolate from a display filled with candy," she said.
Every kid growing up in Kendallville in the 1950s and 1960s remembers the Palace of Sweets at 215 S. Main St. in what was called the Deibele building after its builder, John Deibele.
He constructed the three-story, 180-foot-long building in 1878 and operated a hardware store before Frank Fields purchased the building for a tavern.
From 1910 to 1912 it was fruit store, then a saloon.
Ferris Shaffer owned the building for several years in the 1920s before selling it to Kenneth Blech in 1933.
The Deibele building also

housed C&D Arcade, This 'n That Shoppe and The Timekeeper. The building now houses Kropp Insurance, The Floor Store, Paul's Pub and the vacant Timekeeper site, which was the location for Palace of Sweets.

Kenny Blech operated the Palace of Sweets through the 1950s until his retirement in 1975 and became one of downtown's truly unique but admired characters.

His front windows often featured desserts and molded models of his ice cream specialties, enticing children to drag their weary parents inside for a treat.

The soda fountain was on the left and a taffy pulling machine in a glass case was on the right inside the business.

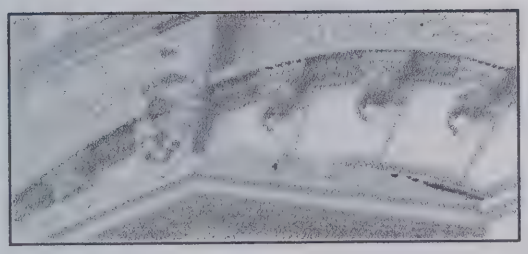
At the back were vinyl-cushioned seats in booths. At the back was a juke box and a small, tiled dance floor. Teens often congregated in the booths, flipping through the automatic record selector, drinking lemon phosphates, Cokes and sodas.

Jean Cochard remembers hanging out at the Palace in the 1930s and 1940s when Mike Canzier, then Bob Lehner and later Blech were proprietors.

"We would sit all evening sipping one Cherry Coke much to the consternation of the proprietor," she said. "We would dance in the back room."

BACK TO THE PALACE — The former Palace of Sweets, located at 215 S. Main St., more recently the Timekeeper store, will reopen later this month as Palace of Sweet Treasures. It will become an antique and collectibles store. Owners are Terry Wagner and Les Lottes. Wagner's wife, Amanda, will operate it.
News-Sun photo by Dean A. Orewiler

Dressed in his white apron, sometimes even wearing a white cap, "Kenny" was a mentor to thousands of teens who hung out at "The Palace" to listen to music, dance or enjoy a hamburger after school.
"It was the place to eat greasy cheeseburgers," writes Pam Bailey of Kendallville.
She remembers watching Blech make candy, hot fudge topping and ice cream.



Beautiful etchings are visible above the old Palace of Sweets building at 215 S. Main St. News-Sun photo by Dean A. Orewiler

Phil W. Kaufman, in his book "In the Beginning: Memories of an Indiana Boyhood," fondly recalls his boyhood experiences in his father's Central Drug Store at 124 S. Main St. that became White's Central Drug Store, then Chronister's Central Drug Store.
"Like all the other stores in the business district, Central Drug Store was long and narrow," Kaufman wrote. "The store's floor was bare wood, which had to be oiled regularly to treat the wood. This also made it easier to sweep with the push broom."
The store had a soda fountain and six tables and chairs. Booths were installed later.
Customers walked passed the drug store items and gifts to get to the soda fountain, grill, tables and booths.
"It was the place to go for great Jolly Roger sandwiches, fries and vanilla Cokes," recalls Anita Hess of Kendallville, who spent time there with her friends in the 1960s when it was Chronister's Central Drug Store. "Remember the green rivers?" she asked.
Arlene (Ramsy) Roberts of Kendallville also remembers drinking green rivers at Chronister's Central Drug Store.

BAND CONCERTS — Weekly free band concerts were held in Kendallville in the 1930s in the band shell, shown in background, located at the southeast corner of West William and Orchard streets about a block west of Main Street. This 1933 photo contributed by Pat Carteaux shows Mary Jo Carteaux in a carriage.

INDIANS IN KENDALLVILLE — This 1914 photo shows American Indians on parade in the 100 block of North Main Street in Kendallville as part of "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West Show. (Photo by Harry Ziebell and contributed by Margie Misselhorn)

In the late 1950s, teen activity moved to the Youth Center on Iddings Street for dances and recreation games, and to the Redwood Drive-in (now Preferred Auto), A&W Drive-in (now Pizza Hut), Dairy Queen on U.S. 6 and Kelsey's Drive-in (now Community State Bank) at the intersection of North Riley Street and U.S. 6. All of them

are gone except Dairy Queen. Teens also moved to the shopping centers to buy their clothes, food and school supplies. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, coffee houses sprang up in the downtown business district to attract young people.

Arcade shops opened in the 1980s downtown, along with video stores, but competition

from shopping mall recreation centers forced these businesses to close. Main Street today, as it was 30 years ago, is the main drag for cruising on summer weekends. Young people find enjoyment driving south on Main through the business district to Diamond Street, then turning around for a northbound trek to U.S. 6.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Berhalter founded furniture store on Kendallville's Main Street in 1860

By CHAD SIEVERS

KENDALLVILLE — Berhalter Furniture, one of Kendallville's oldest continuous retail stores until 1990 when it closed, stands as a downtown business that will be remembered for years.

The store, named after its founder, Joseph Berhalter, was started as a cabinet and coffin shop in 1860. A native of Wurtenburg, Germany, Berhalter emigrated to America in 1828, settling in Reading, Pa. before coming in Kendallville in 1860 to open the business.

Soon after opening, the store became a supplier of furnishings for many of the leading residences of Noble and adjoining counties. It also made burial cases and coffins for funeral parlors in northeastern Indiana. The small shop then was located on Main Street in the old warehouse in the rear of the old furniture store, which today is Corunna Bedding.

While Berhalter served in the Civil War, his wife, Fanny, continued to manage the business.

Following the war, the business boomed. It was able to buy a new hearse that the Kendallville Standard reported as "the most elegant hearse ever brought to this part of the state — a beauty — costing $1,000, cash down."

The business continued to flourish so the Berhalters purchased the Gappinger Building, where the store was until it closed in 1990. The store was remodeled into a furniture store and funeral parlor.

When Berhalter died at the age of 52 on Sept. 4, 1881, his wife with the help of their two sons, George and John, took over the responsibilities of the store.

She died five years later and the name of the store became Berhalter Brothers with George and John running the store.

In 1923 John died and his brother continued to operate the business for another year before he retired.

George's sons continued to run the firm.

Berlanier Installed Furniture Store on Kendallville's Main Street in 1860

In 1928 Arthur J. Berhalter became the sole owner of the business. He remodeled the interior of the store and added a new store front.

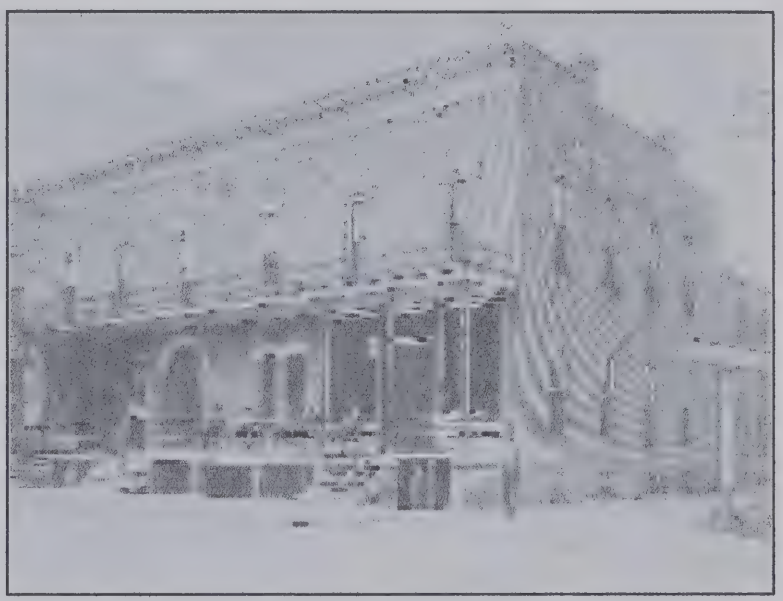
Later, in 1935, the funeral parlor, which had been in the Main Street store, moved to 222 S. State St. where it remains today.

Arthur Berhalter died in 1945 and his widow, Emily, became sole owner of the store. When she died in 1956, ownership of the store went to Arthur's daughter, Mrs. Myron (Beverly) Hutchins. Myron had managed the store for more than 20 years and had been associated with the store since 1930.

Fred Rasp became manager of the furniture store in 1959 coming to Kendallville from Elkhart. In August 1973 Rasp purchased controlling interest in the furniture store.

His son, Steve Rasp, became manager of the store on Jan. 1, 1980, and continued in that capacity until it closed in 1990. The business remained viable, but Rasp chose to enter the insurance field. He and his wife and three children now live in Owatonna, Minn.

John and George Berhalter are shown in front of their Main Street store. Photo was taken about 1890. Corunna Bedding is now located at the site. previously housed the Berhlater Furniture store for over a century.



DOWNTOWN HOTEL — This photo of the Reyher Hotel was taken about 1915. The Reyher later became the Kendall Hotel that was demolished in 1976 to make way for a bank parking lot in the 100 block of North Main Street. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Fires, tornado challenge downtown businesses

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — Kendallville's Main Street business district has seen its share of excitement and hard times.

On Sept. 9, 1886, fire broke out in the middle of the 100 block of South Main Street. Flames nearly 100 feet high destroyed much of the block's wooden buildings. The Kelly House (now Kendallville Auto Parts) at 101 S. Main St. was one of the few brick buildings left standing after the fire burned itself out. The loss was in excess of $29,000.

Frank S. Weber, a former railway freight agent and Kendallville resident for 50 years, spoke to the Kendallville Rotary Club on Sept. 15, 1936, about Kendallville history.

The Sept. 16, 1936, News-Sun reported Weber told club members:

"The business district was swept by a terrible fire, wiping out most of the east side of the street and a block on Mitchell Street east. Poor water facilities caused the loss."

He went on to describe another costly fire on the west side of Main Street that destroyed a number of wooden structures which were later replaced with brick buildings.

The fire was actually a blessing, writes Mrs. Henry Misselhorn in her book "The History of Kendallville."

"The fire was a blessing for it resulted in uniform brick buildings not only on the east side of Main Street but also on the south side of Mitchell Street."

The first City Hall, dedicated on July 4, 1907, was destroyed by fire in 1913, along with the city's sewer records and maps.

Frank Craven and Claude McPherson, two firefighters on duty in the City Hall fire station, were playing checkers or cards when the fire broke out.

According to a rumor at the time recounted in "The History of Kendallville and Noble County, 1863-1963," Craven and McPherson were not aware of the fire until the legs of their table burned off. They managed to escape with a team of horses pulling the fire wagon and actually fought the fire.

Worst disaster in downtown's history was the July 14, 1992, tornado that ripped through the city.
News-Sun file photo

Feb. 19, 1989, fire destroyed Robinson's Downtown Hardware. News-Sun file photo

The City Hall was rebuilt in 1914 and officially dedicated the next year.

On Feb. 19, 1989, fire gutted the second floor of Robinson's Downtown Hardware at 116 S. Main St., causing over $100,000 in damage. The adjoining buildings housing the J.C. Penney store at 112-114 S. Main St. and The Nobleman men's clothing store at 120 S. Main St. also had fire and smoke damage totaling over $36,000. Firefighters from six area communities in addition to Kendallville fought the nighttime blaze.

The July 14, 1992, tornado that caused extensive to the Main Street business district was the most serious natural disaster to hit downtown Kendallville.

Over 17 businesses were damaged when the high winds blew off roofs and building facades, downed power lines and overturned vehicles.

The tornado also caused considerable damage in the city's east-central residential area, the Fairview shopping center, and the Hollybrook Heights and Arvada Hills subdivisions.

The storm caused more than $12 million in damage.

Fortunately no lives were lost.

City Council moved quickly to help downtown business and property owners by making available more than $435,000 for low-interest loans.

Through the efforts of downtown merchants, business owners and city officials, Main Street buildings were restored.

Kendallville received the Community of the Year award for 1994 from the Indiana Chamber of Commerce largely due to its remarkable recovery from the tornado.

The winter of 1978 will be remembered for the drifting snow and below-zero temperatures that closed schools, factories and businesses and access roads to Kendallville for nearly three days.

Snowdrifts over 10 feet high blocked areas in the downtown business district as city crews worked to clear roads for emergency vehicles.

On Oct. 16, 1931, Kendallville recorded its only Main Street bank robbery.

Four men armed with a machine gun robbed the Citizens National Bank at the corner of Main and Mitchell streets.

According to a report in The News-Sun, a bank patron was slugged when his laughter failed to amuse one of the robbers.

The robbers fled west on Mitchell Street in a waiting car, and eventually traveled to Drake Road where they continued west toward Sacrider Lake.

Two of the robbers were eventually caught in Jonesville, Mich.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Some downtown buildings already on historic register

By CHAD SIEVERS

KENDALLVILLE — With Kendallville officials working to get the downtown business area on the National Register of Historic Places, they can look at Business Service Company of America's building as a reference point.

The Iddings/Gilbert/Leader/An-derson block in the 100 block of North Main Street was added to the historical register in 1987 after an extensive application process. The buildings feature a Queen Anne design. John Cazier, owner of Business Service Company of America, said the design was a popular style at the turn of the century.

The building at 107 N. Main St., known as the Iddings Building, was built in 1893, while the building at 109 N. Main St., known as the Gilbert Building, was built the next year in 1894, he said. The north side of the building has 1894 inscribed on the step outside the building.

In an issue of the Kendallville Standard on May 19, 1893, a story said, "Lewis Iddings is now owner of the north room of the new Iddings block on the northwest corner of Main and Mitchell streets. He will soon erect another business room on the north of this room and will then have two first-class building rooms."

Business Service Company of America moved into the building in 1947, Cazier said. (Business Service Company of America has been in business since 1931 and had been located close to where Glad Tidings Books 'n' Gifts is today.) Prior to that, several restaurants, including Franklin's Cafe, the Nartker Cafe, Throp Restaurant and Stemen's Cafe, Wine and Liquers, a hat shop owned by Demorest & Wherly and another Wines, Liquers and Cigars store were housed there.

Cazier said an old beer cellar still stands in the basement from the old liquor store and bar.
In the 109 N. Main St. building, Elmer's Bar, Bonnie Lou's Country Inn, Mission Church, Vaughn Second-Hand Store, Holcomb Printery Publisher and Helmer's Creamery & Produce were some of the businesses housed there before Business Service occupied the building.
The Leader building, 111 N. Main, was built in 1894-95 by William Leader, while the Anderson building was built by Alonzo Anderson. Anderson was an African-American barber who built the building for his barber shop in the mid-1890s.
In the Leader building, American State Bank, City Cigar Store, Clark & Carunchia Market, J.E. Hovarter Radio Shop, M.L. Horner Grocery and a cigar shop owned by J.S. Mulholland were some of the businesses housed there.

John Cazier of Business Serivce.

The Anderson building is on the historical register for African-American businesses. Being a black barber in a small, rural Indiana town at the turn of the century was definitely unique, Cazier said.
Anderson and his wife, Emma, are buried in Lake View Cemetery, the only two blacks buried there. The Anderson family moved to Chicago.
In the Anderson building, American State Bank, Lucky's Tavern, Flamingo Cafe, The Coney King, the News Stand, Billiards owned by Hubert Wright, New Confectionery owned by J.L. Kapp and the Anderson Brothers barbers were some of the businesses once located there.
About 12 years ago, Cazier said the buildings were repainted in the colors they likely were when built. The city had hired an architectural artist who determined what the colors of the buildings were at the time they were built.
"These buildings are so thick, you can't hear anything from the street," Cazier said.

Current businesses on Main Street named

Here is a list of current downtown Kendallville businesses:

200 block of South Main Street

234-232 — City Hall and annex
230 — Dr. James Jansen Dentistry office
228 — Fairview Realty
220 — Northeastern Center
218 — Emerick & Diggins law offices
214 — 7th Inning Stretch
212 — Colwell Merchandising Sales & Design
210-208 — High Tone Health Club
206 — Noble County Council on Aging
204 — Reick Insurance Agency
202 — Douglas J. Atz Law Office
201 — Klinkenberg's
203-205 — Northern Indiana Fuel & Light Co. office
207 — Custom Image
209 — Home Sweet Home
211-213 — Paul's Pub
215 — Vacant
217 — Kropp Insurance
219 — The Floor Store
221-223 — Strand Theatre
225 — Kendallville Area Chamber of Commerce office
227 — Corunna Bedding Co.
231 — Lookin' Good Auto Detailing

100 block of South Main Street

136 — Ebey's Appliance & TV
134 — Mr. B's Sports & Design
132 — Recycled Music & Audio
130 — Family Shears
128 — Kids Unlimited
126 — Images by Baggiano
124 — Picture This in Print
122 — Kandel Insurance
120 — B & P Archery
118 — John's Baby Furniture
116 — Four Seasons Realty
114-112 — Fischer Family Pharmacy
110-106 — Weible's Paint & Wallpaper
104 — Friendship Crafts
102 — Treasure Me Dolls
101-105 — Kendallville Auto Parts
107 — Olympia Sweet Shop
109-111 — Stroman Electronics
113-115 — Glad Tidings Books 'n' Gifts
117-119 — Taylor's Shoe Store
121 — The Bargain Shop
123 — Barker's Jewelry
125-127 — Christianson Jewelers
129 — Tropical Tanning
131 — Hair Connection/Tips to Toes
133 — Regal's Outlet Store
137 — Al's Barbershop (vacant)
139 — King Building (vacant)

100 block of North Main Street

102-114 — Kendallville Publishing Co.
116 — Allstate Insurance
118 — Vacant
120 — Kendallville Party Store
123-125 — Jade Buddha (vacant)
113 — KeyBank
107-109 — Business Service Co. of America
105 — R&L Tax Service
103 — Sportsman Bar & Grill
101 — Hosler Realty

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Remembrances, photos make history series possible

By DENNIS NARTKER

"History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity." — Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106-43 BC.

It started with an idea inspired by City Council's decision to preserve the Kendallville City Hall building and the Downtown Business Association's campaign to preserve the historic downtown business district.
Why not a series of stories of the history of Kendallville's downtown business district?
Sounds like a lot of work. Maybe The News-Sun's business editor will help me tackle this project.
The managing editor liked the idea.
A plan was prepared.
The first part should concentrate on the history, including major events since William Mitchell first platted the west side of the 100 block of South Main Street 148 years ago.
The series should include personal memories of the people, places and events.
Interviews were scheduled. A call for submissions of personal remembrances went out through this column four weeks ago.
As many historic Main Street photos as possible were collected.
The series should also feature longtime Main Street merchants.
Bob Klinkenberg, proprietor of the oldest family-run business on Main Street, appropriately called Klinkenberg's, 201 S. Main St., agreed to an interview.
Dave Christianson, proprietor of Christianson's Jewelers, 125 S. Main St., also agreed to an interview and photos of his watch-making repair skills and equipment.
Craig Fischer, a second-generation pharmacist and proprietor of Main Street's only pharmacy, Fischer Family Pharmacy, 114 S. Main St., welcomed the opportunity.
We caught up with John Cazier, owner of Business Service Company of America, 107 N. Main St., whose building is already on the national register as a historic landmark.

Remembrances, photos make history worries possible

Ron Hudson, manager of the Strand Theatre, 221 S. Main St., a one-time opera house, agreed to talk about his business and show our photographer the theater.

The News-Sun's history was included.

City Councilman Shane Mulholland, who is leading the Downtown Business Association historic preservation campaign, agreed to contribute his family's history of Main Street business ownership.

More than 40 people responded to my call for downtown Kendallville memories.

Pam Bailey of Kendallville wrote a five-page letter front and back, and Mrs. Esther Owen of Albion sent a four-page letter front and back with notes in the margins.

I was overwhelmed with photographs and historic records from Russell Frehse, Jean Cochard, Pat Carteaux, Sharon Stark, Phil Kaiser, Ed and Marjorie Misselhorn and Burnell Aungst.

Here is a list of those contributing to this series: Russell Frehse, Robert Klinkenberg, Irene Schenher, Gladys K. Gardner, Mrs. Esther Owen, Lauren Smith, Phyllis Smith, Pam Bailey, Ray Kurtz, Burnell Aungst, Arlene Roberts, Dewitt Cochard, Marg Andelin, the late Ken Patterson (video), John Cain (video), Vern Steckley (video), Ken Stark, Sharon Stark, Virginia B. Sigler, Jean Cochard, Carolyn Cox, Ersel Cox III, Mrs. Irene Chilcote, Mrs. Pat Kurtz, June Phillips, Phil Kaiser, Larry McGahen, Pamela Mortimore Bryant, Kathy (Hasselman) Young, Alice Swogger, Mary Parker, Pat Carteaux, Anita Hess, Marianna Reick, Norman Seidel, Shane Mulholland, John Cazier, Ron Hudson, Dave Christianson, Edythe (Franze) Nartker, Cleo Mark of Avilla, Lucille Cazier and the city engineering department.

Thank you folks for your effort. If your contribution is not included in the series, I'll try to add it to future Inside Comment articles.

The plan for an eight-part series with a special four-page photo section was given the green light.

For Part 1 in the series, research included reviewing "The History of Kendallville and Noble County 1863-1963," published by The News-Sun with articles by the late Norm Carter; "The History of Kendallville" by Mrs. Henry C. Misselhorn; Arthur Franklin Mapes poetry; "Alvord's History of Noble County"; "Kendallville Merchants Through the Years" compiled by Maryjane Sawyer Jollief and edited by Jean Stiver Cochard; "In the Beginning: Memories of an Indian Boyhood" by Phil W. Kaufman; "Crimson Trail of the Triple Killer" by N.E. Slagaugh in the December 1939 issue of Daring Detective magazine; and "Get Your Man or Else" by W. Ray Dixon in the Jan. 15, 1938, issue of Official Detective Stories.

Two Kendallville Public Library videos also proved useful.

In 1987, library staff videotaped retired Kendallville business owners John Cain and Vern Steckley and the late Ken Patterson describing their downtown memories.

The library had also converted WANE-TV's "Vista '63" TV program from film to videotape on Kendallville's 1963 Centennial celebration.

I also consulted back copies of The News-Sun and conducted interviews.

Writing the series proved difficult. I often wondered how historians condensed over 200 years of American history into one book with a title like "The History of the U.S." Condensing over 140 years of Kendallville downtown history wasn't easy.

Efforts under way to get district on National Register

Efforts under way to get district on National Register

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — Everyone agrees preserving the downtown business district as a national historic landmark is a good idea.

The application process, though, is lengthy and time-consuming.

Led by city Councilman Shane Mulholland, the Downtown Business Association plans to get the three-block business district on the National Register of Historic Places.

A survey by the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana describes Kendallville's Main Street business district between Rush Street and the railway tracks as "a fine representation of late 19th and early 20th century commercial styles."

Buildings occupied by Business Service Co. of America at 107-109 N. Main St. and KeyBank at 111-113 N. Main St. have already been registered as national historic landmarks, according to local historian Russell Frehse, who helped get them registered in the late 1980s.

At first Mulholland was looking at a way to save the City Hall building at the corner of Main and Rush streets. The 2 1/2-story building is not handicapped-accessible, is poorly heated and cooled, has a leaky roof, crumbling stairway and inadequate space for police department operations.

City Council abandoned the 83-year-old building for its meetings four years ago.

Council is considering options to remodel the building or purchase the nearby Northeastern Center building for city offices.

Adrian Fine, field coordinator for the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, told council the downtown district, including City Hall, could be preserved as a historical place.

"At first I was just looking for a way to save City Hall, then I realized after talking with Adrian all of downtown could be on it," said Mulholland, whose grandfather, John Mulholland, operated a popular billiard parlor and sold cigars in the 100 block of North Main Street.

The application process involves researching the history of the downtown buildings and their architectural significance.

A Downtown Business Association committee will divide the district into three blocks, with two to three volunteers conducting the research per block.

Cooperation from property and business owners will be needed.

Mulholland will complete the application with Fine's help.

Once on the national registry, the district will become eligible for federal and state grants, according to Fine.

Frank D. Hurdis Jr., senior architectural historian for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Historic Preservation & Archaeology Division, toured Kendallville's downtown business district in March.

"It's very intact, really excellent and unusual architecture. I see no problems in getting it on the National Register of Historic Places," he said.

Mayor Larry McGahen supports the preservation campaign.

"The slogan on the downtown banners welcomes people to historic Main Street and I support the effort," he said.

Jerry Kessler, Kendallville Area Chamber of Commerce board president, calls the campaign a great idea.

"The chamber is definitely in favor of it," he said.

Barb Mulholland, the chamber's executive director, also supports the Downtown Business Association preservation campaign.

"If we don't start preserving this part of the community, it will be gone forever. Fifty years from now people will be grateful the association did this."

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

From vaudeville to film, the Strand has staged it all

Longtime manager Cleon Point made movie-going memorable

Cleon Point

By CHAD SIEVERS
and DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — One of Kendallville's oldest buildings, the Spencer Opera House, 223 S. Main St., which has housed the Strand Theatre for the past 80 years, holds many memories for Kendallville citizens.

Originally built in 1890, the Spencer Opera House was built by E.B. Spencer for $26,000. Spencer built

the opera house because he believed Kendallville was in need of some culture.
Spencer built the opera house under the verbal understanding with the county commissioners that he would not have to pay taxes on it. Little did he know he would have to pay taxes, so he eventually sold it to Al Boyer, who renamed it the Boyer Opera House.
Long before the days of moving pictures, actors would come through Kendallville from larger cities and put on a show while here.
The opera house opened on Sept. 30, 1890, with the famous Marlande Clarke Company, according to local historian Russell Frehse.
At the turn of the century, vaudeville acts also were popular and the opera house would hold different acts. On May 5, 1911, it hosted Vaudeville Tonight that featured several vaudeville acts.
No record can be found of any opera ever being performed in the 750-seat auditorium. Musicals, heavy and light drama productions and minstrel shows were staged there.
The opera house also served as a community meeting place. On Jan. 15, 1892, it held the funeral for Capt. Hiram Iddings, a respected Kendallville citizen. The City Council also met there, renting space before it met in the City Hall.
It also held 5-cent photoplays, which were not moving pictures.
During World War I, the opera house closed. Not until Aug. 1, 1919, did it reopen as the Strand Theatre.
Even then, Frehse said the building was used for different functions.
"When I was in high school, we had our school play there," he said.
Back before the days of air conditioning, the theater management would open the floor of the opera pit to the basement. Down there they would have a large blower from a thresher machine. With large blocks of ice, they would blow the air over the ice to cool the theater, Frehse said.
In 1928, after attending a theater convention where he heard about Kendallville, Robert Hudson Sr., owner of Hudson Enterprises, purchased the Strand Theatre. This was the beginning of a long-standing tradition of the Hudson family and its association with the building.
Hudson, who at one time owned 24 theaters in Indiana, including the old Hi-Vue Drive-In south of

The Strand Theatre, 223 S. Main St., Kendallville
News-Sun photo by Dean A. Orewiler

Downtown was once home to 3 movie theaters

By DENNIS NARTKER
KENDALLVILLE — At one time there were three movie theaters downtown, the Princess, the Colonial and the Strand.
One week in 1923, "A Blind Bargain" starring Lon

Kendallville, also owned the Princess Theatre downtown, his wife, Juanita Hudson of Richmond said. Hudson Enterprises still owns the Auburn-Garrett Drive-In north of Garrett.

During the early 1940s, Mrs. Hudson would sell tickets. She said children could see a movie for a dime. There were special prices for servicemen, matinees and then the regular evening prices.

In 1946, Mrs. Hudson trained Cleon Point to be a manager at the Tivoli Theatre in Richmond. Cleon soon came to the Strand where he would be the manager for 27 years.

Mrs. Hudson laughingly said the joke for years was that all because of her, Cleon wound up in Kendallville.

Kidding especially grew when all of Kendallville's citizens, including Mrs. Hudson, many times fell victim to his column he wrote for years at The News-Sun. She said she respected the Points.

It was Cleon's unique character that many people in Kendallville remember about their visits to the Strand.

Marianna Reick of Rome City was a teen-ager in the early 1960s when Cleon Point managed the Strand Theatre.

Chaney was playing at the Colonial at 108 S. Main St., Ethel Clayton was starring in "For the Defense" at the Princess at 134 S. Main St., and the Strand Theatre marquee at 221 S. Main St. featured Dorothy Phillips in "Hurricane's Gal."

The late Ken Patterson, in a Kendallville Public Library video recorded in 1987, remembers the Colonial Theater's player piano.

"The theater had a player piano in front of the screen and it played as the picture was shown," he said. "Those were silent movies then and I remember the serials with week-to-week episodes."

Jean (Stiver) Cochard of Kendallville remembers paying 10 cents for a matinee movie at the Strand Theatre in the 1940s.

"Frank C. Templin was the manager with his one usher, a small, slightly-built man named Arnold Schneeberger. Occasionally we would see the movie over through the supper hour and our parents would come and have us paged," she said.

A story in the Sept. 16, 1936, News-Sun indicated meetings held in Mitchell Hall were moved to the opera house, "As fine an opera house to be found in northeast Indiana."

"The Rotary Club gave away tickets at the Youth Center for the Strand on Wednesday nights," she said. "We'd make so much noise I remember one time Cleon stopped the movie, turned on the lights, moved to the front of the movie screen and yelled at everyone to shut up."

John Hutchins of Kendallville worked as an usher there while he was a teen-ager. He joked and said Cleon was the only person who had ever fired him. Hutchins said an usher started work in the balcony and after being promoted, went to the main floor along the aisles. He said the "big time" position was working the center aisle.

One day Hutchins said he was working the sides and he became sick. Cleon sent him home because of it, and this became a joke between the two men as Hutchins' "firing."

Hutchins laughed and said he and the projectionist, Ralph Hill, enjoyed playing practical jokes on Cleon. Many times they would move his car and hide it when he left it running in the alley.

The best joke, though, was when the two young men sent Cleon a cow patty in a Curtis Candy Co. box. He opened it and stuck his hand in the box at the concession counter while talking to a lady. Hutchins said Cleon could be heard yelling a long way off with that joke.

Pearl Point said she would hear many stories from her husband when he came home from the theater. She said Cleon really liked the children and would show children's movies for them.

"Mothers kidded him and said he was the best baby sitter in town, and the cheapest," Mrs. Point said.

In 1956, the Hudsons remodeled the Strand. While it was being remodeled, the Princess Theatre stayed open, Mrs. Hudson said. After the Strand reopened, the Hudsons closed the Princess for good and sold the building.

After the Strand was remodeled, it seated 953. With the new remodeling came a new screen and new stereo system.

It's the old theaters like the Strand that are unique, Mrs. Hudson said. "You don't get the same effect as you do in old theaters."

Hudson and Cleon brought candy and popcorn to the Strand and it caught on like a wildfire. At that time in 1946, no other theater in Kendallville sold candy.

The Strand used to show double features, and the serials were popular on Saturdays, she said. To get more people to come, Cleon would conduct stage shows, hoola-hoop contests and give-away drawings at the Strand.

Known as a strict disciplinarian at the theater, Cleon would keep kids in line if they talked. Yet he was respected by many of the patrons as they knew he meant business.

Mrs. Point said one time Cleon heard noises coming from upstairs in the men's restroom. He walked in and two young boys were sneaking in from the top of the roof through a vent. He waited for them there and acted like he was really mad, giving them a hard time.

One of his more embarrassing moments was in April 1966 when the Strand was playing "The Singing Nun." He received a phone call at home, telling him something was wrong with the marquee, the original marquee since the Strand opened. When he arrived at the theater, he saw the marquee said, "The Sinning Nun."

The Strand used to have morning shows and give prizes away to children when Cleon was manager, Mrs. Hudson said. She also said the movies would be run continuously, seven a day.

Cleon semi-retired from the Strand in 1973, but continued to help out until 1979, retiring after 50 years in the theater business. Cleon died in November 1995.

The availability of movies was much different in the old days than it is today, Mrs. Hudson said. The Strand used to buy pictures at a flat rate. She said salesmen from the movie companies would come in and bargain with the Hudsons to get their movies on the screen.

Today movies operate on a percentage basis, depending on the company and how big the film is.

Mr. Hudson died in 1972 and Mrs. Hudson maintained the Strand, remodeling it again in 1980, making it into twin theaters.

Prior to the remodeling, the Strand had a box office outside and one inside. During remodeling the Strand expanded into an area that had been leased by the Chicago Motor Club. In that area restrooms, an office and small lobby area were added.

During the remodeling the Strand was closed for about five weeks. When Mrs. Hudson reopened the theater with "Coal Miner's Daughter" and a Disney film on a Wednesday, she said she ran the films for seven weeks and the theaters were full for four of those weeks.

Today the balcony is still used for blockbuster movies like "Twister," said Ron Hudson, the Hudsons' son, who now manages the Strand.

The Hudsons owned the Strand until 1984. In 1991, they again took ownership, and then sold it in late 1992 to David John, owner of the Northway Cinema in Auburn. Ron Hudson continues to manage the Strand, keeping alive the 69-year relationship with the building and the Hudsons.

As Mrs. Hudson looks back on all the years in Kendallville, she said, "Kendallville is a small town, but it is a good theater town. The main reason is Kendallville could open big first-run movies on the day they were released, like the upcoming "Lost World."

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Kaiser's Grocery a downtown landmark for over 90 years

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — Kaiser's Grocery at 120 S. Main St. (now B&P Archery) was one of the busiest stores downtown in the 1920s and 1930s, according to lifetime residents Irene Schenher and Russell Frehse.

John Kaiser opened the grocery store in the 1860s, according to his grandson, Phil Kaiser of Fort Wayne.

The original store was built of wood with a boardwalk in front on a cobblestone street.

Merchandise arrived in bulk barrels. The store also sold Haviland and Limoge china, American colored glass, Italian pottery and hand-woven baskets.

John Kaiser's son, George Kaiser, took over the business from his father. George Kaiser operated the store until he retired in 1945. His son Walter Kaiser then became proprietor.

Walter Kaiser's son Phil joined the business in 1954 after his return from the Korean conflict.

The store closed in 1956 when Walter, Phil and his son John opened a supermarket in Angola.

The building housed Skinner's Sewing Center in 1963, then Fischer's Drug Store, The Mode, a woman's

Kaiser's Chimney a downtown landmark for over 90 years

clothing store, and The Nobleman from 1978 until 1992 when B&P Archery opened.
On Dec. 3, 1937, George Kaiser witnessed the infamous Atlantic and Pacific Tea Co. (A&P) grocery store robbery and attempted capture of the suspect.
According to the Dec. 4, 1937, News-Sun, Kaiser told police he thought the fight with the suspect on the street after the robbery was all a joke.
Robert Shaw, a 27-year-old itinerant farm hand, robbed the next-door A&P, grappled with Earl Eulitt, an A&P employee, on the street before shooting him in the stomach and fleeing south on Main Street, and then west on William Street.
Shaw would be wounded by police and captured in LaGrange County the next morning after he shot and killed a LaGrange County deputy sheriff and wounded Noble County Sheriff Ervin Cazier.

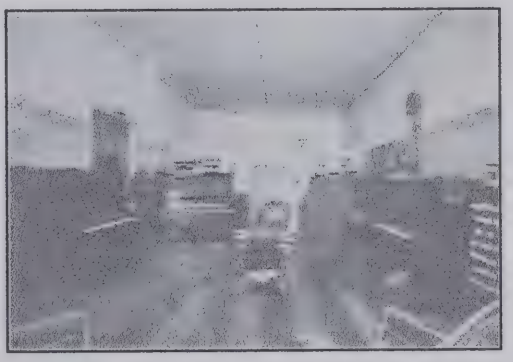
Above and at right- Landmark Kaiser's Grocery at 120 South Main Strett, Kendallville

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Mapes' poems illustrate life in city's infancy

KENDALLVILLE — Arthur Franklin Mapes, whose official state poem "Indiana" helped earn him the title of Indiana poet laureate, captured the flavor of life in Kendallville, Noble County and the state in the late 1800s in many of his poems.
Mapes, who died Jan. 4, 1986, at the age of 72, authored the poem "Indiana" in 1963, when it was adopted as Indiana's official state poem. Later, in 1977, the state decided to honor Mapes as Indiana's poet laureate.
A lifetime Kendallville resident, Mapes worked 33 years as a machinist at Flint and Walling, but his hobby was poetry. His poems reflected his humble beginnings and the love he had for his hometown and state. Many of his poems were printed in national and international publications.
One of Mapes' poems, entitled "Our Town," was written for the 1963 Kendallville Centennial, and another favorite, "The Blacklegs," received acclaim. Both illustrate life in Kendallville and Noble County in the late 1800s.



MUSIC STORE — George Kihm shown here stands in his music store in this 1940s photo. The music store was located at 109 E. William St. just off Main Street in Kendallville. (Photo contributed by Phil Kaiser)

Our Town

Let's ask ourselves,
perhaps this way,

In the village, known
as Northport,

The sky looked dark an'

Could I but turn the hands of time
Back to my boyhood days sublime,
I'd thrill once more to stories told
By bearded men of days of old.
They were the ones who knew the truth
Of Kendallville back in its youth.

This must have been a lovely place
When wagons rolled along the trace,
White-topped wagons oxen drawn
Through forest gloom into the dawn
Of an era; when from toil and strife,
Emerged the Hoosier way of life.
Here, in this spot, so old, yet new,
Our town was born; it thrived, and grew.
The winding trace became a street
As wagon wheels and booted feet
Erased the time-worn Indian trail
That hadn't known a plank or rail.

More settlers came and settled down,
Then Kendallville became a town.
Unbroken forests, lakes, and streams,
This was a place where hopes and dreams
Soon rooted deep in Hoosier soil
As hearts and hands were

"Could there ever be a spot on Earth
More dearer than one's place of birth?"
This town of ours will always be
Loved by you ... and loved by me

The Blacklegs

Ole Sassafras John lit up his pipe,
An' gazed up at the sky.
I knew 'at he wus dreamin' up
A tale of days gone by.

I scooted over by his side
As quiet as could be,
Fer I liked to hear the stories
'at ole John would spin fer me.

He told about the settlers
Of the Indiana hills,
Of wagon trains, an' Indian trails,
An' creakin' water mills.
He remembered when the stagecoach
Rumbled down the ole plank road,
An' how a yoke of oxen
Could pull a heavy load.

He talked about the cabin loft
Where he would lay an' dream,
An' seemed as tho' he still could see
The tallow candles gleam.

'Twus the days when Greg McDougal
Greg McDougal's cabin stood.
He wus crooked like an ole rail fence,
But folks thought he wus good.
He would go to church on Sunday,
An' would join in prayer an' song,
But jist when folks would turn their backs
He'd allus do 'em wrong.

His gang would kill an' plunder,
Strikin' almost every place,
Then would vanish in the forest
An' never leave a trace.

Then the Regulators gathered
Down at Col. Cochran's Inn,
An' vowed the Blacklegs had to pay
Fer every crime an' sin.

They circled 'round by Northport,
Down to Kendallville an' back,
They searched the gloomy forests
An' the bogs of tamarack.

They caught up with the Blacklegs,
An' at last the truth came out,
An' the pious Greg McDougal
stormy,
Yet the wind seemed sad an' still,
When they strung up Greg McDougal
Frum a tree on Diamond Hill.
They buried him at Northport
Where his gravestone can be seen,
An' old an' dated slab of gray
Above the grass of green.

There's a moral to this story
'at ole Sassafras has told,
"Don't ever git to cravin'
Fer another feller's gold,

'Tis better to be down an' out,
An' have a mind 'ats free,
Than to end up like McDougal
Hangin' frum a big oak tree."

bent to toil.

One hundred years! Our
town has changed.
One hundred years has
rearranged
The forest aisles to busy
streets.
Ours is a heritage that
greets
The coming years with
faith and pride,
To all ... her doors are
open wide.As we look
back to yesterday
.

Led his darin' Blackleg
band
Until the Regulators
Rose in strength to take
a hand.

His innocence did
shout;

But the justice of the
settlers
Wus strong, an' swift,
an' sure,
Fer the plague 'at had
beset 'em
There was jist one
simple cure.

So a caravan of
wagons
Took the road to
Diamond Lake.
The men had jist one
purpose,
McDougal's life to
take.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Mulholland family had long history on 100 block of North Main Street

By SHANE MULHOLLAND

KENDALLVILLE — In 1902 James Samuel Mulholland, the son of an Irish immigrant, decided to go into business at 109 N. Main St. with an Eskimo dwarf couple with the last name of Shade. The Shades were circus performers who traveled around the country performing in small communities. When they came to Kendallville, they liked it so well they decided to stay. The current site of Business Service Company of America was then the Mulholland Cigar Shop and Pool Hall.

Approximately five years later, Mr. and Mrs. Shade left town and were never heard from again. This was the

Mulholland family had long history on 100 block of North Main Street

beginning of a long association between the Mulholland family and the 100 block of North Main Street that would span three generations.

James Samuel Mulholland married Olivia Jane Waddell in 1879 and to this union were born three children: Orea, John and Lyle. Due to failing health, James Mulholland retired in 1918 and turned the family business over to his sons Orea and John. They continued to run the shop at that location until 1930 when they moved two doors down to 105 N. Main, the current location of R&L Tax Service.

In 1933, John William Mulholland moved next door to 103 N. Main, today the Sportsman Bar & Grill, to start a restaurant and tavern, after being granted only the second three-way liquor license in Noble County. This was during the Depression when businesses had to stay open all day to survive. John would open the restaurant at 5 a.m. to prepare the 35-cent blue plate special for the employees of Flint & Walling, and wouldn't close until 7 p.m. If a person didn't like the lunch special, he always could get a hard boiled egg and beer for a nickel.

In 1935, John married Maud Halverson and they had a son, John Jr. The Mulhollands lived in an apartment above the restaurant, a common practice for merchants and business owners of that era. As a young boy, John Jr. spent a considerable amount of time playing downtown and in his father's store. It was at this time, when he was only 5 years old, that he decided to steal a cigar from his uncle Orea's store. Trying to emulate the older gentlemen who frequented the store, he attempted to smoke it, which needless to say made him sick. John Jr. hasn't touched a cigar since.

In 1945 John Mulholland sold the business to Joe Babis for $8,500, a considerable sum for that time. Upon closing the sale in the upstairs apartment, John placed eight $1,000 bills and one $500 bill in the hands of young John Jr. and said, "This will be the most money you will ever hold in your hands." Little did he know his son would become a banker in that same block nearly 40 years later.

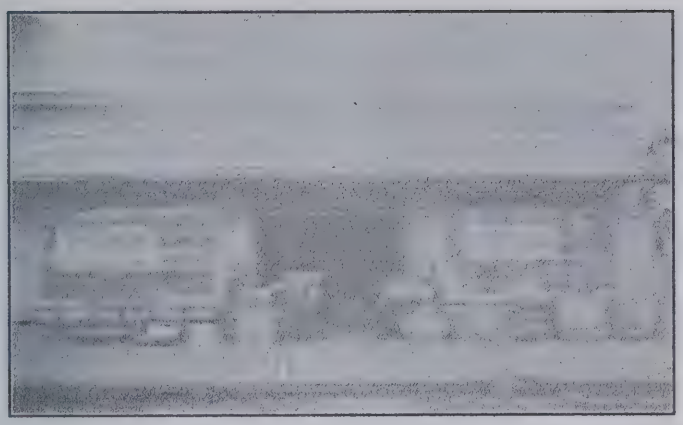
Kendallville is a community rich in history and tradition. It behooves us to learn as much as possible so we may pass it down to our children and our grandchildren. Let us relish and respect our past, not merely taking it for granted.

Special thanks to John Mulholland Jr., Orea "Tony" Mulholland Jr. and Russell Frehse for their contributions.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

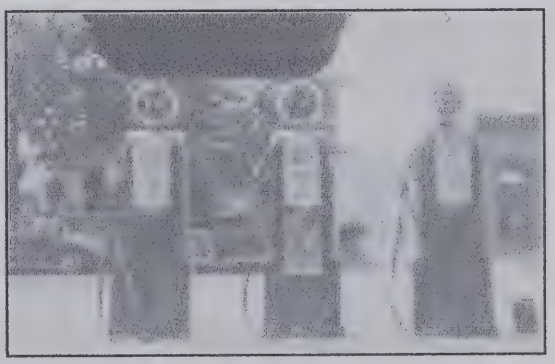
- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Taking a step back in time with photographs



Taking a step back in time with photographsPOPULAR GROCERY — Louis Kaiser, left, behind counter, and George Kaiser, right, behind counter, inside their store, Kaiser's Grocery, at 120 S. Main St., Kendallville. This photo taken in the 1930s or 1940s, shows the long, narrow stores on Kendallville's historic Main Street business district. Man in the middle is unidentified. (Photo contributed by Phil Kaiser)

KAISER'S GROCERY — One of the many grocery stores in downtown Kendallville was Kaiser's Grocery that opened in the 1860s at 120 S. Main St. and closed in 1956. This photo shows Walter Kaiser, left, and his father George Kaiser. (Photo contributed by Phil Kaiser)



GAS STATION-The Shanower Sinclair Station was located at 117 E. William St., Kendallville. (Photo Contributed by James Jarrett)

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

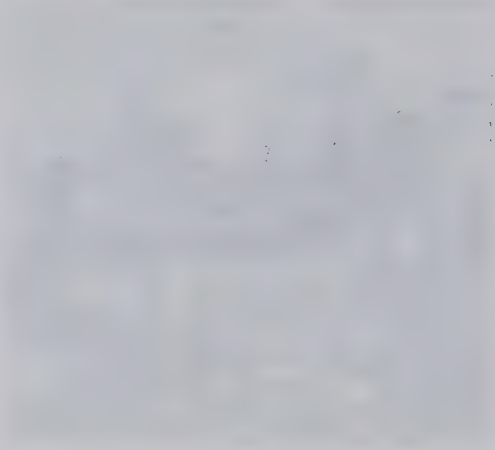
Witwer guided News-Sun through many changes

A native of South Bend and a graduate of Yale University, George O. Witwer worked for several newspapers on the East Coast before becoming editor and general manager of The News-Sun in 1962. He purchased Kendallville Publishing Co. in 1969 and was instrumental in its dramatic growth over the years. Witwer, 67, retired in 1996 as publisher. He remains the principal owner.
The following is his response to an interview about the history of The News-Sun.

Why did you come to Kendallville?

It seemed a good idea at the time ... and a good idea it proved out to be (at least for my family and me). I had applied for the position of editor and general manager here in 1958, when Busty Fischer died. My cousin Ed Witwer of Niles, Mich., knew Joe Krall, president of McCray Refrigeration Co. Joe mentioned the opening to Ed, who, thinking of me, told my father, who told me. I was just leaving the New Haven (Conn.) newspapers to start up two shopper publications and a small print shop.
I didn't get the job. I was 28 at the time, and perhaps considered too young. Joe Gaskill, the advertising salesman, was promoted to general manager and Norm Carter, the reporter, was promoted to editor. But the relationship between the Carters and the Gaskills, even though they attended the same church, was not smooth. Joe would launch an off-street parking program for the merchants. Norm would write editorials against the plan. Eventually, Joe had a heart attack.
Wyman Finley, the attorney for Mrs. Alice Merica, who owned The News-Sun, found my application from four years previous in his files and phoned my father. Meanwhile, I had sold the shoppers and print shop to my partner and moved from Connecticut to Brooklyn Heights in New York City with Lee and our four kids. I had joined a partnership with two guys from the Wall Street Journal. We published a weekly six-page newsletter on common market stocks called The London Letter. By an amazing coincidence I was about to fly to my parents' house in South Bend for the weekend before an appointment with the Continental Bank in Chicago on Monday when my dad received Wyman's phone call. I told my dad I wasn't looking for a job, but when he suggested he might help me finance the purchase of The News-Sun, I agreed to drive over to Kendallville on a Saturday and talk with Mrs. Merica and Wyman.

NEWS-SUN TEAM — The editorial staff of The News-Sun gathered for this photo in 1966. From left to right are George O. Witwer (editor), C. William West (city editor), Wendell Jollief (sports editor), Bill Gisel (photographer, reporter), Jeanette Hetrick (society editor) and Marguerite Sand (wire editor).



They struck me as delightful people ... Wyman with his gracious manners, small, compact body, large head with heavy eyebrows and beautiful hair; Alice W. Merica, still bright, beautiful and smiling at age 97; small, trim, straight-backed, with a rather big mouth, high forehead, gray eyes, I believe; she resembled the late Helen Hayes.

Mrs. Merica explained to me that before her husband, Charles O. Merica, died in 1917, she had promised him she would never sell The News-Sun during her lifetime; but I could buy it from her estate. Frankly, no one lived past 97 back then. I doubted I would have long to wait.

The News-Sun had not been doing well financially. I figured I'd restore its profitability; then, after I'd bought the newspaper, I'd quickly sell it and return to my partners in New York with a capital gain. I did manage to turn The News-Sun around financially. After about two years I almost forgot about owning The News-Sun. I sold my one-third interest in The London Letter to a fellow whose Japanese wife had highly-placed connections; the Japan Letter which followed did just great until his wife caught him with another woman. That was the end of the Japan Letter. Meanwhile, Mrs. Merica lived one month short of 104!

What was the downtown business district like back in the early 1960s, and what was the newspaper office like? How many employees did the newspaper have? How many reporters and back-shop people?

There was never a vacant storefront on Main Street back in the 1960s. But changes were afoot. The A&P moved from South Main Street to a new building at the intersection of Riley and Wayne streets (now the Kendallville IGA); then, out of town. The wags who tied a rowboat to a stake in the swampy area at the intersection of U.S. 6 and Ind. 3 with the sign "Stonebraker's Folly" suffered their comeuppance when Tony Carunchia opened Foodtown Supermarket there and began buying full-page ads in The News-Sun. The Publix Cafe was torn down to make way for the Publix Village Square shopping center. Rival merchant groups competed with two Santas and two Christmas parades to the confusion of area children. Mainstay stores like Atz Furniture moved from the Kelly House Hotel, where Kendallville Auto Parts is now located, to U.S. 6, following residential and manufacturing growth north.

As for The News-Sun, it had not changed much before I arrived from about 1911 when its previous owners, Mr. and Mrs. Michaelis, consolidated the News and the Sun, moved to 109 N. Main St., purchased an expensive new flatbed press from the Goss Co. and a complicated linotype typesetting machine; then, overextended financially (I suspect), they sold out to the Mericas in 1913.

There were seven of us who worked in tight quarters with our desks back to back in the front office and nine who toiled with hot lead in the back shop putting out the paper. After a monumental effort writing most of our eight-section centennial edition in 1963, Norm Carter left The News-Sun for a career with the News-Sentinel. For a short time, I handled the wire copy and all of our news with the exception of sports and social notes. I also supervised our ad sales. And Avis Dickey, our bookkeeper, worked harder than any of us and supervised me. Somehow we got through the days, the paper slowly improved and we hired more people.

Now I had money to hire a reporter, but darned if I could find one. My first hire materialized from a bank in Goshen. His name was Jim Phillips. Tall, thin, blond with twinkling blue eyes, Jim was as refreshing as a drink of water on a summer day. I explained things: "I can't afford to pay you very much. You'll have to work night and day. But when you can write a 30 point headline as well as I can, I'll get you a decent job on a decent newspaper."

"Anything's better than working in a bank," Jim said.

In 1964, we covered the Palm Sunday tornado together. We were the first newspaper reporters to arrive at the church at Rainbow Lake where 19 people died. Our flashlights caught sight of the bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Yoder who were killed while fleeing toward the church. The tornado rolled them over and over in barbed wire. They were not a pretty sight. We photographed some strange things, like the strand of straw driven into a tree as though it were a nail.

Probably the biggest story I personally covered for The News-Sun was the school consolidation issue that dominated the news in the early 1960s. Prior to the state's school consolidation act each of Noble County's nine townships ran their own school systems. Graduates of Avilla High School or Wawaka High School were enormously proud of their schools even though their schools could not offer the selection of courses available at the Kendallville or Ligonier high schools.

People like Mrs. Louis Lash of Avilla wrote passionate and articulate letters to me about the issue. As our only reporter at the time, I was challenged to cover the issues in a way both sides would perceive as fair. The most bitterly divisive battle was between Ligonier, Cromwell and Wawaka over the location of West Noble High School. The people of Ligonier argued that a location in Ligonier made the most economic sense. Utilities were easily available and fewer students would need to be bused. But the majority of those living outside of Ligonier would agree to locating the new high school anywhere except in Ligonier. They had the most votes.

Once, the late Lyle Schuman, the Ligonier representative on the West Noble school board, arrived late for a meeting with his clothes dirty and disheveled and a cut on his forehead. He claimed he had been run off the road on his way to the meeting by people, he claimed, who wanted to prevent him from voting.

REMEMBERED — Ralston V. "Busty" Fischer's photo and Oliver typewriter are on display today in The News-Sun editorial department. Fischer, father of Kendallville pharmacist Craig Fischer, was editor and general manager of The News-Sun from 1937 until his death in 1958.

Two daughters of a prominent Kendallville merchant had moved to Chicago in the halcyon twenties and returned to Kendallville late in the Depression with a Negro maid. One of the daughters was bedridden and needed to be bathed daily.

The Negro maid was a big, jolly person with a deep voice. She was popular with the merchants on Main Street, according to Dave Hughes, co-owner of the Firestone store whom I remember interviewing when I wrote her obituary at the time she died. The reason I wrote the obituary was because I received an anonymous phone call asking if I had checked the death certificate. I phoned John Hutchins at Berhalter-Hutchins Funeral Home and asked if I had to come down and check the death certificate; he grudgingly told me that "she" was in fact a "he."

Paul Zawadzke

I don't know yet if I did right to expose the black man's secret. The sisters were embarrassed, although I tried to mitigate the scandal by questioning in my column what desperate economic condition might have driven the black man to conceal his sexual identity from them. On the other hand, it was my job to print the truth and I could not very well write an obituary using "she" when I knew it should be "he." Much later we were faced with another case where a popular citizen died of AIDS. In this case our newspaper used the story he and his family had put out to describe his illness, rather than what we knew was written on the death certificate. Again, I don't know if we did right.

Kendallville Standard office was at 102 S. Main St., now site of the Treasure Me Dolls store.

How has the business changed? What impact did changing to offset printing have on the business?

The late 1950s and early 1960s were not good ones financially for Kendallville Publishing Co. Net income in 1956 was $10,870; 1957, $7,583; 1958, $7,001; 1959, $5,164; 1960, $6,545; 1961, $4,065. By 1962 when I arrived things already were improving. We ended 1962 with a taxable profit of $6,631.79 on total revenues of $139,952.86. In 1963 our gross sales rose to $168,227.56 and profits before taxes were $11,371.69. In 1964, taxable profits were $14,991 on sales of $178,004. Our profits now were easily covering Mrs. Merica's dividend, and I could do no wrong in her eyes.

But then disaster struck. We changed our printing process from letterpress to offset. From my time working on newspapers in the East I had seen the future and its name, I felt, was offset printing. I couldn't wait to convert a newspaper to offset. But I didn't tell anyone about my plans. I didn't want to frighten people. Already my wife was telling me I was stirring things up, making too many changes, asking too much of the employees, and confusing everyone.

Our Goss flatbed press dated from 1911. It was the oldest press of its type under a continuous Goss maintenance contract in nine states. The Evening Star in Auburn had a press newer than ours and Vern Buchanan, its owner, re-equipped with brand new letterpress equipment in 1962. I knew that if we could stretch our press's life a few more years, we could put in revolutionary new equipment that would save us manpower in the back shop and allow us to hire more reporters, ad sales and circulation people, and, yes, make more money. Maybe instead of one editorial person for more than 1,000 subscribers we could afford one reporter for every 500 subscribers. (Today, with over 8,000 subscribers and about 14 editorial people, counting part-time equivalents, we are closer to that goal than in 1962 when we had two and one-half editorial people for about 3,300 subscribers.)

By 1964, I was spending much of my time studying the new offset printing process. I heard of a new offset press the shopper in Coldwater, Mich., had installed. I drove up to see it at the publisher's open house.
As I sipped his punch and nibbled his cookies, I made the mistake of opening my heart to him. We had so many ads from our Main Street merchants that I had trouble printing them all, I said. It took us two and one-half hours to print The News-Sun, I told him. The shopper publisher listened very closely.
A couple of weeks later Jack Emerson, the postmaster, phoned me. "I think there is something you should know, George. A man from Coldwater just left my office. He took out a third-class mailing permit," Jack said.
My blood froze. My God, I thought, I'm going to have to share our advertising income with a shopper just when I'm trying to pay for a new press. I rushed to complete the business plan I had been preparing for Wyman Finley and Mrs. Merica. Only one other daily in the state, The Martinsville Reporter, had gone offset, and although the publisher claimed the conversion was successful, he confessed after he was badgered by other publishers at our state convention that even if it wasn't successful, he wouldn't admit it. I needed authority to buy the building next to us, build on to the back of it and install a new type of printing press and new composing equipment. All of our bonds and savings would not be enough. Mrs. Merica at the age of 99 would have to authorize me to put the company in debt. Should a 99-year-old woman take on thousands of dollars of debt?
I tried to explain things to Wyman. He was noncommittal. Finally I said, "Wyman, I can't assure you that our profits will be greater if we convert to offset, but I'm positive they will be less each year if we don't."
With the business plan finally completed, I telephoned Mrs. Merica for an appointment.
"What do you want to see me about? Is everyone warm enough there?" Whenever I telephoned her in the winter her first question was if her employees were warm enough.
"We're warm enough," I assured her. "Do you remember that press the newspaper bought back in 1911?" I asked.
"Yes, I remember it," she said.
"I think we need a new one," I said. "Our pictures will look better. We'll be able to add color and we can make money doing job work for others."
"Can we afford it, Mr. Witwer?"
"I'll need your permission to borrow some money, but I believe we can afford it, Mrs. Merica."
"Well, good, Mr. Witwer. You go do it!"
A week or two later she phoned me to say she had not noticed an improvement in the pictures in the paper.
Six months later, in July 1965, while fighting for our economic life against the new shopper, we converted to the offset. Our profits disappeared and I was afraid that I might be fired. We ended the year with an operating loss of $2,092 compared to an operating profit of $17,496 in 1964. The sale of old letterpress equipment brought our net profit to $455.27 for 1965 compared to $14,992 in 1964. About a month after we went offset we were able to start our own shopper. The downtown merchants chose to support our shopper.
Early in 1966 the man from Coldwater asked if we would like to buy his Kendallville office's typesetting equipment and furniture. I said we would be delighted.
In 1966 we grossed over $25,000 in commercial printing revenue and our profits exceeded those of 1964. We added to our staff as our volume grew. Today we publish two dailies, a weekly, three shoppers, dozens of special sections and a good many other publications and fliers we don't own. We employ about 130 full-time and part-time equivalent people. Thanks partly to inflation, our volume and profits are many times what they were when I arrived that pretty June day in 1962. Thanks most of all to those downtown Kendallville merchants who supported us when our financial life hung in the balance!
The change from letterpress to offset printing, although it offered great opportunities, discombobulated many News-Sun employees. None was more agonized than our longtime foreman, Paul Zawadzke.

Paul began working at The News-Sun at the age of 12. His family had scraped some money together to send Paul to a Lutheran school in Chicago in preparation for a career in the ministry. Poor little Paul was so homesick for Kendallville that he ran away from the school and walked all the way home from Chicago.

His parents were so disgusted with him they sent him to The News-Sun to work in the basement casting hot lead. Eventually Paul was promoted to foreman because he was the only employee in the back shop to whom everyone would talk. The compositor would say to Paul, "Paul, tell that blank, blank linotyper he made this line 34 picas when I asked for 36." The linotyper would reply, "Paul, tell that blank, blank stone man 34 picas is exactly what he asked for."

When I informed Paul we were switching to offset, Paul had worked at The News-Sun more than 40 years.

"Well, George, I guess it's time for me to retire," he said.

"You can't retire, Paul. If you retire, I'll retire and then who will run this place?" I replied.

He grudgingly agreed to stay on, supervising the publishing of The News-Sun more by the force of his will than by any real understanding of the chemistry upon which offset printing is based.

After our transition to offset printing was completed, Paul said to me once, "George, it would just be my luck to live long enough to have to go though this again." Such a situation I would now be facing had I not been able to retire last year.

We began publishing The News-Sun on the Internet (www.noblecan.org/~kpc, for those with Internet access) a year ago. Rather than replace the printed page, the web edition will complement it. We can store vast amounts of digitized words and photos on our web site. This can be accessed day or night from a home computer, or, within two years, from your TV set. I foresee more of an evolution than a revolution shaping up. Our web site will be competing for the attention of our subscribers with other web sites and our job will be to make it the most useful to subscribers and advertisers alike. Our printed edition will promote it. For example, this series on downtown Main Street will be available to anyone at any time on our web site through a "hyperlink" from our web page.

As Paul might have said, I think I'm retiring at about the right time.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Biographies of early Kendallville businessmen listed

The following are biographies of early Kendallville merchants featured in Alvord's turn-of-the-century Noble County history book:

Archy Campbell

Descended from Scotch-Irish ancestry, Archy Campbell was born in 1856 in Syracuse, N.Y. He lived in New York, Canada and California before coming to Kendallville, where in partnership with his brother, John A. Campbell, he engaged in the mercantile business.

After four years, Archy Campbell purchased his brother's interest in the store. In 1887 Jacob C. Fetter was admitted to partnership. In 1894 the two became engaged in banking, with great success.

Campbell married Kate R. Mitchell in 1880, and they had four children: Donald, William, Joseph and Gertrude.

Campbell, who was known for his energy, integrity, wisdom and courtesy, became one of the wealthiest men in Noble County. He was president of the local educational board and was involved with efforts to help the poor.

Jacob C. Fetter

Jacob C. Fetter was born in 1861 in Richland County, Ohio. In 1864, the family moved to DeKalb County. He taught school for three terms in DeKalb County before accepting a position in a store in Butler, where he worked until 1884, when he became a merchant in Kendallville with H.D. Ward. The firm was Ward & Fetter. After the firm was destroyed by fire, he formed a partnership under the name of Campbell & Co.,

which proved successful. In 1894, he engaged in banking, under the name of Campbell & Fetter.
In 1891, he married Flora Park. He enjoyed a high reputation as a progressive and honorable businessman, ever ready to advance educational, moral and material prosperity in the city and the county.

Dr. Warren S. Williams
Dr. Warren S. Williams was born in 1862 in Defiance County, Ohio. He graduated from the high school in Kendallville in 1882. He studied medicine under his father, Dr. Nathan Williams, and then entered the medical department of Western Reserve University. In 1884 he began to practice in Kendallville with his father.
He had an extensive office practice, besides visiting many of the best homes in the large farming community around Kendallville. He was a warm-hearted family physician and as a surgeon he was known for being calm, no matter how grave or critical the situation.
For eight years he served as a member of the City Council. In 1886 he married Jennie Otis, the sister of Amos Ray Otis. They had three children: Harold, Lucille and Anna.

John Deibele
John Deibele was born in Germany in 1839. In 1852, he came to New York City and made his way west as far as Adrian, Mich., before coming to Kendallville, where he began learning the cooper's trade. He then worked with the Hopkins Bros. sawmill for three years, and then learned carpentry. After being a contractor and a builder for five years, he entered a partnership with Charles Arnold in a planing-mill. After one year, Diebele became the sole owner and added machinery for the manufacture of sashes, doors, blinds, moldings and all material used in the construction of buildings. Over the years other lines were added and the volume of business grew, making it one of the leading industrial enterprises of Noble County.
Diebele, a self-made man, was known for his force of character and strong will as well as his interest in public affairs. His first wife, Hannah, with whom he had five children, died. His second wife, Rosa, also bore him five children.
He served on the City Council in Kendallville and worked in the German Methodist Church and had a number of houses and lots in Kendallville as well as his valuable manufacturing plant.

Amos Ray Otis
Amos Ray Otis, Kendallville's well-known druggist, was born in Dalton, Ohio, in 1868. He lived in Hicksville and Defiance, Ohio, before entering the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy, where he studied one year. He worked in a large drug establishment in Brooklyn, N.Y., for one year before coming to Kendallville, where he worked for G.H. Lohman for two years.
In 1894, Otis opened one of the finest drug stores in northeastern Indiana, and he became known as one of Kendallville's best merchants.
In 1893, he married Allie Williams. They had one child, Warren. Mr. and Mrs. Otis were great favorites in the social circles of Kendallville.

Samuel B. Brillhart
Samuel B. Brillhart was born in Stark County, Ohio, in 1842. In 1862, he moved from his father's farm to Kendallville and engaged with his brothers in the flouring-mill business until 1872 when he purchased their interest. In 1890 fire destroyed the plant.
He was employed by McCray Brothers, dealers in refrigerators and conductors of a cold storage establishment, as a traveling salesman until 1898 when he was appointed postmaster of Kendallville by

President William McKinley.
In 1873, he married Zoe Owen. They had one child, Don, who graduated from the literary department of the University of Michigan.
Brillhart was known as polite, affable and obliging.

David C. Walling
David C. Walling was born in Erie County, N.Y., in 1835. The family moved to Kendallville in 1866. Walling went to an academy at Fredonia, N.Y., leaving when he was 18 to become a machinist in Fredonia. In 1855 he accepted a position in Norwalk, Ohio, where he continued for 11 years.
In 1866, Walling came to Kendallville and entered into partnership with William W. Hildredth and Simeon Flint. Their machine and general repair business was called Hildredth, Flint & Walling. In 1872, Hildredth disposed of his interest to A.B. Park & Bros., and the firm was changed to Flint, Walling & Co. They continued to manufacture agricultural implements and do general mechanical work until 1874 when the plant was greatly enlarged and the manufacture of windmills and pumps was introduced. It became one of the largest industries of its kind in the United States, if not in the world.
In 1889, the famous Steel Star Mill, one of the firm's specialties, was introduced. In addition to the Star Mill, the firm made all kinds of water tanks, steel towers for mill and tank supports and at least 100 kinds of pumps.
Walling married Frances Peters in 1865, and they had eight children. Known as a man of remarkable ability and superior judgment, he served on the school board of Kendallville and as an elder in the First Presbyterian Church in Kendallville.

Jacob Keller
Jacob Keller was born in Germany in 1838. In 1854, he was a stranger in a strange land seeking employment in New York City. He had jobs in New York City, New Jersey and Texas. After careful study, he decided to move to Kendallville. In the spring of 1864, he engaged in business with Messrs. Kaufman & Jacobs, merchants. In 1889, Keller opened for business a private banking house, known as the Noble County Bank. Two years later the bank was incorporated, with Keller as its president.
In 1875, he married Pauline Hyman from Ligonier. They had four children. Due to poor health, Keller had to leave Kendallville in 1891 and made his home for several years in Chicago, where he believed the pure air of the lake would be beneficial.
In 1888, he visited Europe where he saw many of the places familiar in his boyhood days. He returned home with better health and a more intense admiration for the benefits Americans enjoy. He served for two terms on the City Council.

George P. Alexander
George P. Alexander was born in Somerset County, Pa., in 1844. His family moved to Wayne County, Ohio, and then to Allen County, Ind., before moving to Kendallville. As a young man he learned the plasterer's trade and bricklaying, which he did until 1864 when he joined the Indiana Volunteer Infantry. He was commissioned captain, and his bravery earned him the favorable notice of his superiors.
Returning to Kendallville, Capt. Alexander engaged in general contracting and building until 1876, when he was appointed clerk in the railway mail service. He continued four years and then resigned to engage in mercantile pursuits. During the next 15 years he had a large business in the grocery line, retiring in 1894. He served on the City Council.
In 1868, he married Olivia Demmon who was her husband's able and willing co-laborer. They reared two girls and attended the Christian Church.

Abraham M. Jacobs

Abraham M. Jacobs was born in Kendallville in 1864, but when he was 8 his parents took him to Europe, where he remained until 1882. Then he entered Bryant & Stratton's Business College of Chicago, and then became a bookkeeper with J. Keller and Co. of Kendallville. When the Noble County Bank was organized, he became a director and its cashier.

In 1889, he married Nannette Keller, daughter of Jacob Keller, and then had two children. He was a member of the City Council for several terms and was a faithful and conscientious public servant.

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Massive '37 manhunt ended daring bandit's crime spree

Deputy killed; sheriff, store worker shot by 'Iron Man Shaw'

By
DENNIS
NARTKER
KENDALLVILLE
—

Gunfire, a daring holdup and a heroic capture effort shook up Main Street in 1937. The bandit shot and wounded

national detective magazines. On Dec. 2, 1937, Robert Shaw, 27, an itinerant farm hand from LaGrange County, robbed the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. (A&P) grocery store at 118 S. Main St. of $69 in cash. According to the Dec. 3, 1937, News-Sun, Shaw entered the store, placed a

scarf
over
his
face
and
pulled
a
.22
caliber
automatic
handgun
from
his
coat.

He
ordered
18-year-old
store
clerk
Robert
Trowbridge
to
open
the
cash
drawer.
Trowbridge
initially
refused,
but
when
the
bandit
threatened
to
shoot
him,
Trowbridge
complied.
Earl
Eulitt,
23,
a
store
employee,
grabbed
a
4-pound

weight used on the food scales and threw it at Shaw, striking him in the head. Shaw was temporarily dazed, but exited the store. Eulitt followed him outside and they grappled on the sidewalk in front of the store. Shaw shot Eulitt in the stomach. Jack Watts, manager of

the nearby Kack's Quality Market, and Doyle Hulitt, a customer in the A&P, ran after Shaw. Watts threw a bottle at him at the

Store employee Earl Eulitt

– Gunfire and a chase excited people in Kendallville's downtown business district on Dec. 3, 1937 when a man robbed the o. Store (A&P) at 118 S. Main St. and shot an employee who grappled with him on the sidewalk. A crowd is shown here P after Earl Eulitt, shown left, was shot attempting to capture the robber. (Photo from the Jan. 15, 1938, issue of Official Detective Stories magazine)

and William streets. Edythe (Franze) Nartker of Kendallville remembers her father telling her how he was downtown and witnessed the ruckus. "I

remember
him
telling
me
he
hid
behind
a
tree,"
she
said.
Marjorie
Haskins
of
Kendallville,
whose
late
husband,
Richard
Haskins,
worked
at
the
A&P,
also
recalls
seeing
the
commotion.
"I
remember
walking
uptown
and
seeing
the
ambulance
stop
in
front
of
the
store
with
a
lot
of
people
there,"

she said. Shaw turned west and ran down William Street, then ran down an alley behind A&P. Other witnesses interviewed by The News-Sun and police included: Orrin Campbell, an A&P customer, Herbert Dickinson, Paul Brown, C.E. Baker, Mrs. Dan Welch, who watched the incident from a car parked in

front
of
the
store,
Fred
McWhinney
Jr.
and
George
Kaiser,
proprietor
of
the
nearby
Kaiser's
Grocery,
who
told
police
he
thought
the
two
men
grappling
on
the
sidewalk
was
a
joke.
Eulitt
was
hospitalized,
but
recovered.
Shaw
paid
a
motorist
$1
to
drive
him
to
the
Walter
Devenbaugh
farm,

about 1 1/2 miles east and a mile north of LaGrange. He had worked there for a month during the summer. The motorist notified police after he had heard a description of the bandit on the radio. Police surrounded the farm house. Walter Devenbaugh was working in a cornfield

and his wife had just started for the field as police arrived.

MAIN STREET LUNCH CAR —
Fulk's Lunch Car in the 1920s in Kendallville's Main Street business district was located where the vacant Jade Buddha Restaurant is now located in the 100 block of North Main Street. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

When LaGrange County deputy sheriff Henry Spice opened the rear door of the home, Shaw shot and killed him. Shaw fired again through the door, wounding Noble County Sheriff Irvin Cazier. Shaw then ran from the house into the woods.

A general alert went out on police radio throughout Indiana and Michigan, and officers converged on LaGrange County for the manhunt.

"Throughout the night all highways were patrolled by armed posses and state police," reported The News-Sun on Dec. 5, 1937. "Cars were stopped at roadblocks."

Two Michigan State Police riding the sideboard on a police car spotted Shaw running in a cornfield about one-half mile south of Ontario in LaGrange County.

Jim Williams and Claude Boszor, two Kendallville firefighters, and the only two civilians taking part in the all-night manhunt, were on foot in the area and saw police close in on Shaw.

As Shaw fired at them, the Michigan police shot Shaw in the wrist with a high-powered rifle and in the head with a shotgun. Williams and Boszor saw him fall.

Shaw was hospitalized, but recovered and confessed to the crimes, including several service station robberies.

The December 1939 issue of Daring Detective magazine, in describing the crime spree, called Shaw "Iron Man."

Indiana State Police Superintendent Donald F. Stiver congratulated police, and Williams and Boszor, for their efforts in capturing Shaw.

SNOW CLOSES KENDALLVILLE — In late January 1978 a major blizzard with more than a foot of snowfall paralyzed Main Street, as well as the rest of the city. Schools were called off for a whole week. This view is looking southwest. (News-Sun staff photo)

SNOWBANK — Kendallville has suffered some heavy snowfalls over the years. This Feb. 28, 1908 photo of Kendallville's downtown business district shows the snow piles created at the edge of the street from clearing the street and sidewalk. Photo was taken in the 200 block of South Main Street on the east side looking southwest. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse).

CITY FIRE DEPARTME Kendallville's Fire Department 1900s poses outside the City Ha house. (Photo contributed by Ir Schenher)

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register

- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Journalism long a part of Main Street history

By TERRY HOUSHOLDER

KENDALLVILLE — Fourteen years before Kendallville's incorporation as a city in 1863, a newspaper office existed on South Main Street. Nearly 150 years later, journalism continues to thrive in downtown Kendallville. Since the early 1960s, under the leadership of George O. Witwer, The News-Sun, a daily newspaper serving Noble and LaGrange counties, has seen its circulation grow significantly. And it has gained statewide recognition for its journalism awards and its community service.

In the spring of 1849, William H. Austin, who was an accomplished fiddler, established the first newspaper in Noble County. He published the Noble County Star from the second story of Samuel Minot's store (later known as the George Aichele property) on South Main Street.

He would grind out about 300 copies of his publication which sold at an annual subscription rate of $1.50.

Austin soon moved the office to Albion after acquiring a small room in the Noble County Courthouse. A year later he sold it to Samuel E. Alvord, a law student from Pennsylvania who came to Indiana to regain his health.

The second newspaper in Kendallville was the Noble County Journal, established in 1860 by Judson Palmiter, an intellectual man from Ligonier. Palmiterpublication was 's weekly editorially linked to the political party of Abraham Lincoln, who captured the White House in the first year of the paper's existence.

Journalists long a part of Main Street history

In 1863, a rival Republican newspaper, the Kendallville Standard, was founded by Dr. C.O. Myers. In 1870, the Journal was consolidated into the Standard by Myers. The Standard's offices were located at 102 S. Main St. (now occupied by the Treasure Me Dolls store).

In November 1877, Dr. A.S. Parker published the first issue of Weekly News in Kendallville. Parker, a native of Ohio, graduated from medical college in Cleveland in 1857, and took up the practice of medicine in Kendallville. He established the newspaper in Garrett in 1875, but moved it to Kendallville for financial reasons.

The Weekly News was a Democratic-leaning publication and was a financial success, as was the Standard. Several other newspapers in Kendallville appeared and disappeared in the mid-to-late 19th century, including the Daily Bulletin, the Semi-Weekly Times, the Kendallville Sentinel, and the Bee Keeper's Guide. Most of them were in circulation less than a year. C.E.L. Brown's paper had the shortest life — one issue in 1890.

On Feb. 22, 1890, the Daily Sun was launched by Joseph S. Conlogue, who had became part-owner of the Kendallville Standard. Eight years later, Parker followed suit, starting the Daily News in conjunction with his Weekly News.

Conlogue was a native of Kendallville, born June 19, 1843. His father was a farmer who built some of the first homes in Kendallville, including the one belonging to William Mitchell, considered the father of Kendallville and the city's most prominent resident.

Conlogue took an active role in the community. He helped found the Eastern Indiana Agricultural Society, which started the Noble County Fair in the 1880s. He was the fair secretary for 14 years. He also served eight years on the Kendallville school board and was a member of the Kendallville City Council. He later was appointed stamp agent and inspector of the United States Internal Revenue Office in Indianapolis and sold his interest in the newspaper.

By 1911, Kendallville's two rival daily newspapers were consolidated by owners O.E. Michaelis and George W. Baxter, and the Kendallville Publishing Co., with offices at 112 N. Main St, was created.

The weeklies were discontinued and Kendallville became a one-newspaper city.

Two years later, in 1913, Michaelis and his wife, who owned the entire stock of Kendallville Publishing, sold their interest to Dr. Charles O. Merica, a well-known educator and lecturer. He had served as a university president in South Dakota and Wyoming. And he pioneered new methods of rehabilitation at correctional institutions, emphasizing self-discipline and the value of the individual. He published The News-Sun until his death in 1918 at the age of 54.

The business then passed to Merica's family, with his wife Alice W. (White) Merica, becoming the principal stockholder and president of the corporation.

A native of Warsaw, Mrs. Merica was the daughter of a California '49er. Her father bought farms around Warsaw with the profits from his gold diggings.

Known for her wit and charm, Mrs. Merica was long active in the Tuesday Club, a women's study organization and the oldest social club in the city (which marks its 100th anniversary this year). She also served on the city library board and was active in the First Presbyterian Church.

C.W. Bridenthal was editor and general manager of The News-Sun from 1918 until his death in 1937.

R.V. "Busty" Fischer (father of Craig Fischer, currently a Main Street, Kendallville, pharmacist) began his journalism career in 1907 as a reporter for the Daily News in Kendallville. He became editor and general manager of The News-Sun in 1937, serving in that capacity until his death in 1958 from lung cancer at the age of 69.

Joseph K. Gaskill became general manager in 1958, leaving in 1962 to assume a position in the advertising department of the Daily Herald-Telephone in Bloomington.

The current owner of The News-Sun, George O. Witwer, assumed the position of editor and general manager of The News-Sun in June 1962. He became publisher and owner after the death of Mrs. Merica on Jan. 27, 1969. Mrs. Merica was 103.

When he first arrived in Kendallville, The News-Sun was a sleepy newspaper with a circulation of 3,600

and 16 employees. Today, Kendallville Publishing Co. (KPC) has 129 employees. The company has offices at 102-114 N. Main St., Kendallville, and in LaGrange, Auburn, Ligonier and Angola. In addition to The News-Sun, KPC publishes the Evening Star in Auburn, and Advance-Leader in Ligonier, and has a commercial printing division. Witwer and associates also are owners of the Bluffton News-Banner

Known for his keen business sense and innovative thinking, Witwer brought about dramatic changes to The News-Sun. It was the first newspaper in northeastern Indiana to be printed with an offset lithography press. That was accomplished in 1965. (See related story on Witwer's memories on Page A4.)

The News-Sun was also one of the first newspapers in the state to use computers in the newsroom and in 1981 was the first paper in the nation to receive the United Press International (UPI) worldwide news reports via an earth-station receiver from a satellite in orbit 22,300 miles above the equator.

In 1996, it became one of the first newspapers in the state to have a web page on the worldwide Internet system. Readers in Australia report they look at The News-Sun daily on the Internet, before some subscribers in Kendallville find their edition on their front porch.

Witwer has been very active in the Kendallville community over the years, being a member of various clubs and serving on numerous boards and fund drives. His company was named Citizen of the Year by the Kendallville Area Chamber of Commerce in 1983.

In August 1996, Witwer retired at the age of 66. However, he retains a stock interest in the company. He and his wife, Lee, remain active in the Kendallville community.

Their four children, Grace Housholder of Kendallville (a News-Sun columnist and an editorial writer the past 20 years), Violette Wysong of Wawaka (the companyattorney), Sally Stolz of Rockville, Md., and George B. 's Witwer of Bluffton (co-owner of Bluffton News-Banner), are among the KPC board members.

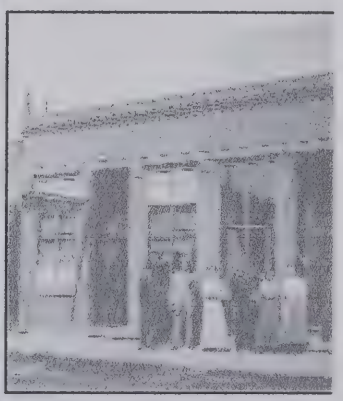
Witwer's successor as publisher is James D. Kroemer, 50, who rose from the ranks as a reporter and then as editor and general manager of The News-Sun and its sister newspaper in Auburn.

''Downtown Kendallville has a long and fascinating history, and The News-Sun has been an integral part of it,'' said Kroemer. be just as interesting as the past has been, and I know The News-Sun will be there to record it.''

''I think the downtown's future will

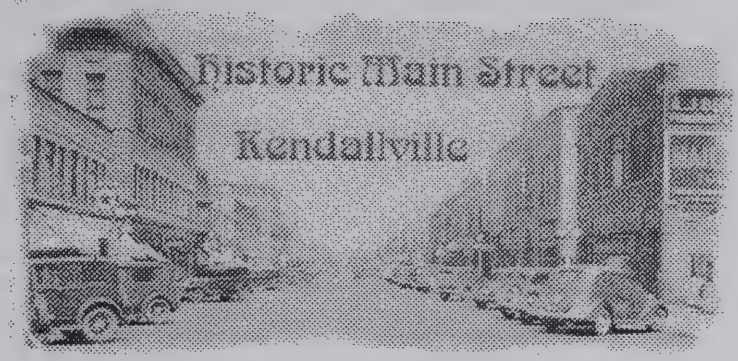
The back shop of the Weekly News, 112 N. Main St., Kendallville, around the turn of the century.
The News-Sun was established in the same building in 1911.

Kendallville Standard office at 102 S. Main St., now site of the Treasure Me Dolls store. Sketch is from the turn of the century.



The office of the Weekly N. Main St., Kendallvill the turn of the century. owner, O.E. Michaelis, from left. His wife is ne:

- Christianson's
- Klinkenberg's
- Downtown Evolves
- Fischer Family
- Unforgettable Characters
- Music
- Downtown Hangouts
- Berhalter
- Disasters
- Historic Register



- Remembrances
- Strand Theatre
- Kaiser Grocery
- Mapes
- Mullholland
- Photo Gallery
- Witwer
- Early Businessmen
- Massive Manhunt
- Journalism

Residents recall unforgettable downtown characters

By DENNIS NARTKER

KENDALLVILLE — "Main Street is a lawyer's office, a newsstand, a Coke date, a stray dog, dodging downtown traffic. It's a men's store, a boys store, a baby shop and a ladies' ready-to-wear. It's green, amber and red lights, complete with walk and wait.

Main Street is a dentist's chair, a shoe shine, a haircut, a bag of popcorn and parallel parking.

It's a movie house, a hardware store and a harangue on the corner, a bottle of booze and a brisket of beef.

Main Street is more, too. It's a Memorial Day parade, a Christmas tree land of lights.

Even more, Main Street symbolizes security. As long as there is a Main Street, there is the nation." — wrote Norman Carter in "The History of Kendallville and Noble County, 1863-1963," an insert to The News-Sun. (A longtime resident, Carter resides on South Morton Street.)

Kendallville's historic Main Street business district is three blocks long and about 1,500 feet from Rush Street north to the railway tracks.

An individual walking at a brisk pace can negotiate the distance in about three to four minutes if the two pedestrian lights are green.

Why let over 160 years of history pace by so quickly?

Pause and stare at every storefront. The restored facades have a timeless quality. If these buildings could talk, they'd tell us about downtown characters like Sassafras John, Brickley Lawson, Fred Marti, George Vlahakis, Kenny Blech and Cleon Point that passed their way.

They'd speak about the stores and businesses in their spaces, like Gutelier's

Irene Schener shares memories

Merchant Bob Klinkenberg

They'd speak about the stores and businesses in their spaces, like Gutelier's Store, J.C. Penney's, G.C. Murphy's, Cox's Meat Market, Westphal's Restaurant, Nartker's Restaurant, the Kemery Bakery, Morris 5 & 10 Store and Charlie Blumer's Drug Store.

How about the time Buffalo Bill rode through town? Remember the Christmas tree each Christmas in the center of the Main and William streets intersection?

The buildings can't talk, but current and former Kendallville citizens can who remember fondly the downtown characters, stores and special occasions.

"That big man who had a horse and wagon, I was afraid when he came to town. When we were kids we were afraid of him," said Irene Schenher, 79, of Kendallville, when asked about downtown's characters from the past.

Schenher, Bob Klinkenberg, 85, and Russell Frehse, 87, recently sat down at a table in Klinkenberg's store and talked about their memories of Kendallville's downtown.

Surrounded by unusual sale items, a marble soda fountain and glass display cases that make Klinkenberg's the oldest and most unique store in Kendallville, these citizens joggled their memories.

There was Sassafras John Bates, made famous by the late Arthur Franklin Mapes, Indiana's poet laureate and Kendallville native, in his poem "The Blacklegs."

"I can remember watching old John Bates walk by and the kids would tag him and say mean things to him because he tried to get enough money when he came to town to buy a drink of booze," said Frehse. "His home was way out east near the DeKalb County line."

Schenher remembers as a little girl coming uptown on Saturdays to pay the grocery bills. She always stopped at Vetter's Bakery, 104 S. Main St., started by her grandfather Casper Vetter.

"I enjoyed the big sugar cookies and German coffee cakes," she said.

Pat Carteaux of Kendallville also remembers Vetter's Bakery that became Kemery Bakery in 1949.

"Vetter's made the best pecan rolls in the world," she said.

Phyllis V. Smith of Kendallville calls Vetter's Bakery the best smelling store on Main Street.

"My dad always stopped for cinnamon rolls to have with our coffee and milk when we got home on Saturday nights," she said.

Pam Bailey of Kendallville liked Kemery's jelly rolls.

"Ted Kemery would go in the bakery around 3 a.m. and make the rolls. You could go there early Saturday morning and the bakery smelled of yeast and warm flour. He always had a smile even at that hour in the morning."

At the Palace of Sweets she bought 35-cent tin roof sundaes.

"That was my favorite. My father would give me 50 cents for the weekend and that would pay for a movie and a tin roof. That was a lot of money for a teen-ager then," she said.

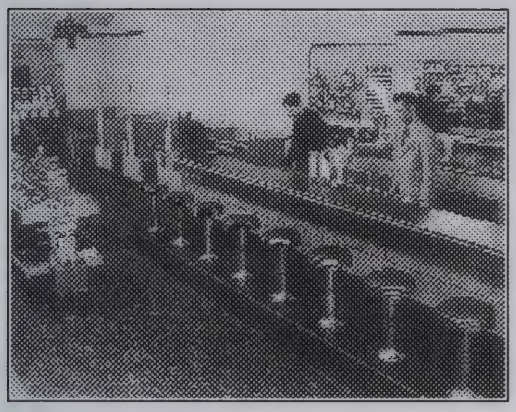
Frehse worked at Nartker's Cafe, 107 N. Main St. (now Business Service Company of America) mopping the floor and wiping the windows.

Fred Marti, a city police officer who walked Main Street in the 1920s and 1930s, was an imposing figure, according to Frehse, Schenher and Klinkenberg.

"He was a big man with huge hands. He could lift a 60-pound bag of wheat and put it on his shoulders," said Frehse.

Klinkenberg

Historian Russell Frehse



CHARLIE BLUMER'S DRUG STORE — Charlie Blumer's Drug Store, in this 1940s photo, was one of the popular places in downtown Kendallville to find relief from hot summer nights. The store had air-conditioning. From left are Charles Blumer and Lauren Eckhart. (Photo contributed by Sharon Stark)

According to the May 13, 1937, News-Sun, Lawson told the nation it was through the patronage of citizens at his diner that he was able to hand out free meals. Lawson taught

Frehse.

The city Christmas tree erected in the intersection of Main and William streets outside Klinkenberg's store in the 1920s was a popular holiday tradition.

"They took the manhole cover out and put a great big tree in there, then built a rack around it," said Frehse. Santa Claus visited with children at the tree and people donated gifts and food under the tree.

One of Kendallville's most generous downtown characters, and a man who received national acclaim for his charity, was Lawson Brickley, proprietor of Lawson's Diner.

Located just south of the Corunna Bedding Co. building on the east side of Main Street (now Lookin' Good Auto Detailing), the diner had a 13-stool counter service with a grill and large coffee urn.

Irene Chilcote of Pleasant Lake remembers a 2-inch counter pan filled with smoked sausage 24 hours a day. She worked at the diner in the mid- and late-1940s.

At the far end of the counter were two meat stands with roast pork and roast beef.

"He sold many sandwiches and was well-known. People from all walks of life entered his little diner at some time or other," she said.

On Dec. 22, 1931, in the midst of the nation's Great Depression, Brickley began a charitable endeavor that would take him to New York City and national radio.

He began serving free meals to the poor, the transient, the hobos, and the destitute, provided they could recite the Lord's Prayer.

"Now if they did not know the Lord's Prayer, he would give them a card he had printed up with the prayer on it. He would send them away and tell them to come back when they learned it and he would give them a meal," said Chilcote. "That really amazed me the first time I saw him do that."

Lawson's unique generosity gained nationwide attention in May 1937 when he appeared on NBC radio's "We the People" program to explain why he gave free meals to the homeless and beggars.

Chilcote how to fry eggs to help with the busy breakfast shift.

"You see, the grill was very slippery and the minute I would crack an egg onto it the egg would slide into the grease trap. Mr. Lawson worked with me for an hour to teach me how to fry an egg on the grill. I can still see it as if it were yesterday," Chilcote said.

Lawson's unique character was also obvious at lunch time.

He had a large dinner bell on a pole outside the diner. At noon he would climb the pole and ring the bell for everyone to hear, according to Chilcote.

Cleon Point, former manager of the Strand Theatre, 221 S. Main St. should not be overlooked on the roll of honor of downtown's unique characters. His scowling face and growling, angry voice set many a misbehaving teen-ager back in his seat.

For five decades Point's life was the theater business, including a stint as

a vaudeville stage hand. He went to work at the Strand Theatre in 1946. He was the first manager to bring popcorn and candy to the Strand and conducted everything from stage shows, hoola-hoop contests and give-away drawings to attract crowds.
In an article in the Nov. 16, 1989, News-Sun, Point recalled one time when he was prepared to scold a woman in the theater with a crying baby.
He heard the baby screaming and marched down the aisle to try and rectify the problem. As he knelt down to tell the mother to "shut the kid up," he noticed the mother was breast-feeding the baby. As Point described the situation, the well-endowed woman, furious at him, flipped one of her breasts back toward him, nearly knocking him off his feet and filling his face with the milky-white substance.
Howard Reick, 92, downtown

EARLY GROCERY — One of downtown Kendallville's popular 19th century groceries was Kaiser's Grocery at 120 S. Main St., shown here in 1875. Store owner and founder John Kaiser is shown on the left. His son George Kaiser, 13, is on the right. A poster in the window promotes "Wallace & Co.'s Great World Menagerie & Museum." (Photo provided by Phil Kaiser)

Kendallville's oldest active businessman, remembers the day his father, Michael Reick, gave him a beer at the Kelly House (now Kendallville Auto Parts), 101 S. Main St.

"My dad gave me a beer in a shot glass there once after we paid our grocery bill at the Colonial Grocery Store," he said.

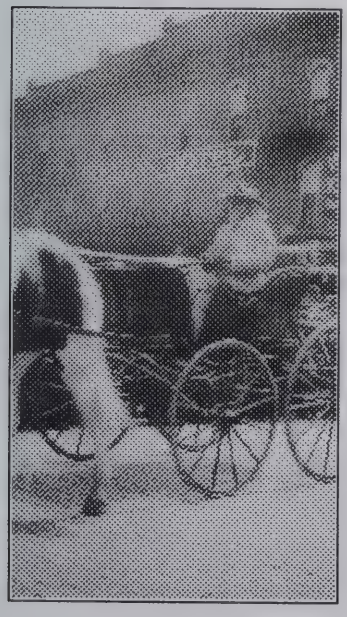
One of Sharon Stark's first summer jobs in 1947 was working in Charlie Blumer's Drug Store, 111 S. Main St. (now Stroman Electronics).

"I was really excited about going to work in Charlie Blumer's store because they had recently remodeled and put in air conditioning. That was my idea of heaven," she said. "On hot Saturday nights people poured into the store to cool off and have a sundae or soda. As many as seven girls would work behind the soda fountain on a busy night."

Main Street was action central on Saturday nights.

"My favorite

memory of downtown Kendallville was coming to town on a Saturday night in the early 1960s," recalls Kathy (Hasselman) Young. "My parents and I would come early to find a parking space. Dad and I walked to the popcorn stand at the corner of Main and William streets to get our favorite popcorn — Dad's was with peanuts and Mom's and mine with extra butter. Then we would walk back to the car, eat our popcorn and keep track how many times my brother drove by."



BUFFALO BILL — "Buffalo Bill" Cody is shown here cruising through Kendallville in 1914 with his wild west show. The Kelly

Gladys Gardner of Kendallville says some people on Saturdays would park their cars on Main Street, walk home for supper and come back, assured they had their favorite parking spots to watch people go by.

As a little girl, Marie E. Schwartz of Kendallville went uptown on Saturday nights with her parents clutching a dime she could spend.

"I remember holding that dime in my hand until it was time to go home, then we'd go to Wright's Ice Cream store, 115 E. Rush St., and get a half-pint of maple nut ice cream."

Pamela Mortimore Bryant has fond memories of the G.C. Murphy's store, 106 and 108 S. Main St. (now Weible's Paint & Wallpaper).

"Murphy's was a special place to me as a young girl. My mother was employed there for nearly 50 years. To me she was Murphy's," said Bryant.

Murphy's was the place to shop in the 1950s and 1960s. Shopping there was socializing for many people.

"Men would gather near the front doors (waiting for their wives to finish shopping) and talk about everything from farm crops, to politics and the weather. As they talked they ate from sacks of roasted redskin peanuts or cashews," she said.

At 8:55 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights, store management played a recording of Kate Smith singing "God Bless America" indicating to

wild west show. The Kelly House hotel at 101 S. Main St. (Kendallville Auto Parts) is in the background. Cody was born in 1846 when Iowa was considered the western frontier. He died in 1917. (Photo by Harry Ziebell and contributed by his daughter Margie Misselhorn).

shoppers the store was closing.

"Kendallville's downtown was a wonderful place to work and grow up," said Bryant.

Downtown visitors sometimes stayed at the Kendall Hotel, (now the KeyBank parking lot) in the 100 block of North Main Street.

June Phillips of Kendallville worked there in 1944 as a waitress and remembers why she soon learned the location of the hotel restrooms.

"One day a lady came in for dinner and asked where the restrooms were," Phillips remembers. "I was new on the job and couldn't answer her question and told her to ask at the front desk. She looked at me and said 'Hmm, you just work here.'"

As a young boy, Ray Kurtz of Kendallville would go to the barbershop below the Kendall Hotel, read the newspaper sports pages and comics and watch traveling salesmen get their haircuts.

Rimmell's Hat Shop, 133 S. Main St. (now Regal's Outlet Store), was where women would gather in the 1940s to have their hats trimmed with bows, flowers and ribbons, according to Virginia B. Sigler of Wildwood, Fla.

The candy counter in the Morris 5 & 10 Cent Store, 110 S. Main St. (now Weible's Paint & Wallpaper) was one of the popular downtown stores on Saturday nights.

Alice Swogger of Kendallville worked behind the counter.

"It was a dizzy pace waiting on customers lined up three deep to buy a nickel's worth of jawbreakers or a half-pound of chunk chocolate. Starting pay was 30 cents an hour. We were afraid to snitch a piece of candy because the manager was George Kirkwood, and his reprimands were swift and caustic."

Mayor Larry McGahen recalls a fire at the Kaiser Grocery when his father, Bill McGahen, was a volunteer with the fire department.

"I can remember going uptown to watch the fire and hearing one of the firefighters say we can't find McGahen. I ran home crying and telling my mother. We learned that Dad was upstairs fighting the fire and left the building using the rear stairs." Lucky's Tavern, Banner Grocery, Sellick's, The Mode, The Toggery, The Melody Bar, Vanderburg's Meat Market, J.C. Penney's, Burger's Tavern, Carney Henry's Barber Shop, Gutelius Drug Store, Seagly's Hardware, Miss Irie's Gift Shop, Swartzlander's Jewelry, Butch's Novelty Shop, Skinner's Sewing Center, Haffner's 5 & 10, The Cinderella, Stemen's Cafe

DOWNTOWN CELEBRATION — This his photo taken in the 1920s of Kendallville's downtow business district shows a band leading a parade. No view looking south with the tower on top of the Kell building, sometimes referred to as the Spindler buil (now the Northeastern Center) in the 200 block of S Main Street. (Photo contributed by Russell Frehse)

MAIN STREET CROWDS — This photo of downtown Kendallville in the 1920s shows the Kelly House hotel (now Kendallville Auto Parts) at the corner of Main and Mitchell streets. Note the crowded streets, angle parking and decorative streetlights. (Photo taken by Harry Ziebell and provided by Margie Misselhorn)

and Campbell Co. Dry Goods are among the hundreds of different businesses over the years that characterized Kendallville's Main Street business district.

Parades, political rallies and holiday celebrations, windows painted KHS red and gold, then East Noble High School blue and gold, angle parking, then parallel parking, crowds of shoppers, then skateboarders and rollerbladers, hobby shops and coffee shops, then video stores, baseball cards and the Olympia Sweet Shoppe returns.

So many memories, so many changes.

Frehse, whose documentation of local history is unmatched by any other, says it best: ''Don't quote me, quote the source. In the Bible in Ecclesiastes, it says, 'That which has been is that which shall be. There is nothing new under the sun.'''